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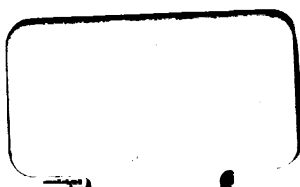
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THE “LADY MAUD.”

THE "LADY MAUD:"

SCHOONER YACHT.

A NARRATIVE OF
HER LOSS ON ONE OF THE BAHAMA CAYS,
FROM THE ACCOUNT OF A GUEST ON BOARD.

BY
W. CLARK RUSSELL,

AUTHOR OF "A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART," "AN OCEAN FREE LANCE,"
"THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR,'" ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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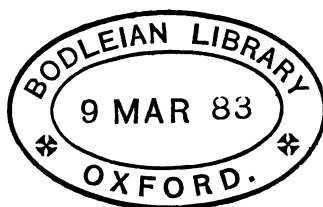
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THE "LADY MAUD."



CHAPTER I.

By half-past ten I was very sleepy. Miss Tuke had come on deck, and kept Sir Mordaunt and me company in a few turns ; but Norie, who made one of us, managed to hook her arm under his, pretending that the deck was not safe walking, as though *he* (whose gait was a convulsive stagger compared with her beautiful, elastic, buoyant tread) could prop her up. But she was disposed to be complaisant, and presently he sneaked her over to the lee side of the deck. If this did not delight me, I was solaced by remembering that she had often snubbed him briskly enough, and I construed her

kindness into a little compliment to his amiable reception of her mild derision.

But, as I say, at half-past ten I felt very sleepy. There was nothing in sight, the wind was piping grandly, and the yacht having been put about for a short board, so as not to miss the wreck by going to leeward of her, had settled down on the port tack, and was yerking along, her weather leeches shivering and her sharp nose biting an opening through the short, black, foam-topped surges. It seemed a pity to be cruising about after a kind of phantom ship when we could have lain our course at nine knots an hour, and made perhaps a fair run out of these humbugging latitudes. But there was too much humanity, though based methought on a somewhat airy foundation, in my friend's resolution, to allow me to utter a word against it.

I was awakened by a sharp rapping on my door, and on opening my eyes was surprised to find the daylight broad upon the

scuttle, for it did not seem to me that I had been asleep above an hour. I asked who that was, whereupon the steward put his head in and told me that the wreck was close by, and Sir Mordaunt would be glad if I'd come on deck. I immediately rose and dressed myself. It was easy to judge without going on deck that there was a considerable sea running and a very strong wind blowing, for the yacht was plunging sharply, and every now and again I could hear the sharp rattle of spray upon deck, while the washing of the sea against the side of the schooner was exceedingly heavy and noisy. In less than five minutes I was out of my cabin.

Sir Mordaunt stood close against the companion, gazing to leeward, and when he saw me he pointed with great excitement to the sea, crying, "There she is, Walton! I told you the signal was not put into the sky for nothing. How are we to rescue them?"

I looked, and saw a large water-logged

vessel—apparently a barque—upon our lee beam. She was a complete wreck, and recalling the features of the mirage we had beheld on the preceding day, I perceived that this was the vessel that had painted the reflection in the air. Her foremast was gone just under the top, though the foreyard still swung upon it, supported, it seemed to me, by the truss. Her main topmast was standing, but her mizzen-mast had carried away short off at the deck, and stood up like a huge bunch of sharp, jagged, white splinters about two feet high. Portions of her deck forward were blown out. Only a sailor can figure to his mind the image of confusion and wreckage aloft, masses of black rigging hanging over either bulwark, the maintop-gallant-mast swinging over the topsail-yard, upon which the furled sail lay in rough heaps of canvas, with the gaskets hastily and clumsily passed, as though by men who had worked in an extremity.

But this was not the spectacle that fixed

my eyes. The hull of the vessel was sunk to about six inches below her washboard, so that nothing but her bulwarks prevented the water from standing to that height upon her decks; but about three feet abaft the star-board fore-rigging the bulwarks were smashed level with the decks, making a fissure about twelve feet wide, through which, as the hull slowly rolled, with the most sickening, languid movement that can be imagined, the water flashed out in a roaring coil of foam, as though a sluice-gate had been opened. She had apparently had a deck-load of timber, for though most of it was gone, a number of planks still littered the decks, lying one athwart the other in hideous confusion, with fragments of the galley and fore-deck-house, which had been split to pieces, lying amongst them, together with such a raffle of gear, broken spars, pieces of canvas, and the like, that no description could give you the barest idea of the dreadful picture of shipwreck that immersed hull presented.

There was another deck-house aft, close to the wheel (or where the wheel had stood), which the furious seas had left uninjured ; and upon the top of this structure were three men and a woman, lashed to a thin iron rail that ran around the top of the house. On examining them through a binocular glass, I perceived that two of the men were scarcely clothed, having no more than their shirts and drawers on, whilst the woman had a sailor's jacket buttoned over her shoulders ; but her black hair was loose, and blew out in a cloud from her head, a small matter for me to take notice of, and yet one that gave a most melancholy wildness to that miserable group of human beings. Meanwhile, and very frequently, the seas, dashing themselves against the weather bulwarks of the wreck, shot up in long sparkling masses of green water, that blew in scattering clouds over the deck, and again and again the men and the woman were hidden from our gaze by bursts of spray which momentarily veiled the whole of the after part of the barque.

It was indeed blowing a very stiff breeze of wind, and the pitching of the yacht to the strong Atlantic sea that was running was made fast and almost furious by her being hove to under a treble-reefed gaff-foresail, with her nose right into the wind, to prevent her forging ahead of the wreck.

I do not say that the sight of those men of themselves would not have made a most thrilling and irresistible appeal to us for succour ; but how that appeal was heightened, so that it raised a passion of anxiety in us — and at least I can speak for myself and Sir Mordaunt — by the presence of the poor woman, I will leave it to your own heart to conceive. All our crew stood forward looking at the wreck, and constantly directing their glances at us, as if to guess our intentions, and Purchase and Tripshore were together near the wheel.

"Walton," said Sir Mordaunt, who seemed to be stirred to the very soul by the sight of those people on the barque, "you'll not wish

me to apologize for rousing you up at this hour. I want you to advise me. Purchase is dead against our lowering a boat in this sea, and says we should stand by the vessel until the weather moderates. But this wind may last for another week, or it may freshen into a gale and blow us away. Meanwhile how long have those people been in that situation? For all we know, they may be starving, Walton. You see they have no boat, and cannot come to us. We are bound to succour them, and at once."

I took a hurried look around at the sea, and said, "Yes, at once."

"At all events the attempt must be made," he continued, in a manner so agitated that his words rolled over one another as they tumbled out of his mouth. "I'll cheerfully share the danger. I'll go in the boat."

"No, no," said I; "if you'll put the job into my hands, I'll answer for the right kind of attempt to save them being made."

"You're a good fellow," he cried ; "for God's sake go to work."

His charging me with this matter convinced me that he had found old Purchase more obstinate than he liked to admit. But it was impossible to look at the wreck and wonder at his emotion. The people made no signs to us, unless a sign was meant by the woman, who sometimes raised her hand. They hung together like corpses ; but no doubt their reason for keeping still was that if they unlashed themselves they stood a great chance of being swept overboard. Although we were hove well to windward, and abeam of the wreck, the send of the sea was settling us faster to leeward than she was travelling, and every heave carried us nearer. This, however, was no great matter, for the yacht was perfectly under command, and a shift of the helm would speedily forge us ahead of the wreck. As it was, we were now near enough to make our voices heard, so, jumping on to the rail, I hailed the vessel.

One of the men, he that was most fully dressed, replied by lifting his arm.

"Are you English?" I shouted.

He motioned affirmatively. This was fortunate, for had they been foreigners I must have found great difficulty in making my meaning intelligible. At my first call the men clapped their hands like shells to their ears, to catch my words, and the passion of eagerness expressed by this posture made them the most moving figures in the world.

"We mean to send a boat," I hallooed; "but as we can't risk sheering alongside, we'll drop under your stern, and as we pass you must jump. Do you follow me?"

The man again raised his hand.

"See that you get the woman over first!"

This injunction was likewise heard and understood. I sprang on to the deck and ran up to the mate.

"Mr. Tripshore," said I, "yonder is the biggest boat," pointing as I spoke, "and fortunately she hangs to leeward. Will you

please sing out for volunteers? I'll take charge, and if you'll accompany me I shall be glad."

"I'll go, sir," said he, promptly; and immediately went along the deck and called for volunteers. All the men came tumbling aft, that is, all the sailors among them. My utter disregard of old Purchase had put him into a great passion; and he was additionally mortified by the quickness of the men to come into an errand which he had advised Sir Mordaunt against.

"It's nothen short o' murder!" he rattled out, straddling up to Sir Mordaunt, and struggling to control his rage. "If Mr. Walton's a sailor, he'll know that this is no fit sea for a yacht's boat to be lowered into."

"Keep back!" shouted Sir Mordaunt, impetuously. "Mr. Walton knows what he is about. Don't interfere with him."

What more passed I cannot say, being busy from that moment with choosing my

men for the boat. She was a six-oared boat; but I would not fully man her, for, though I saw it would be hard work pulling to windward, which we should have to do to regain the stern of the vessel, yet those people on the wreck must make the boat dangerously deep in such a sea if six men manned her. I therefore chose three of the best hands, and told Tripshore to take stroke.

"When we go clear," I called to Sir Mordaunt, "let Purchase make a board to windward, and then wear and heave the yacht to, to leeward of the wreck." And so saying, I jumped into the stern-sheets, shipped the rudder, the men seized their oars, and we were lowered.

The boat hung by patent clips, that is, by hooks which flew open and released her the moment she touched the water and eased the falls of her weight. But for this we might not have got away without a ducking, or something worse. As it was, five men hanging upon the davits in a

heavy boat made a dangerous weight for those iron fixtures to sustain, and I own I held my breath as we were lowered. But there was no other way of launching ourselves. The yacht rolled so heavily, that at moments her lee rail was flush with the water, and by bringing the boat to the gangway we should not only have risked staving her, but some of us must have broken our legs or necks in getting into her. Yachtsmen, however, are nearly always good boatmen. We were lowered handsomely, though carefully, the boat touched the water, the hooks flew open, and the fall-blocks rushed past our noses as the yacht rolled from us and hung like a cliff over our heads. In an instant we were swept up and away from the side of the schooner, which swung heavily towards us, sinking low until we looked down upon her white decks, which lay like the side of a hill. "Give way!" I bawled, the oars flashed, and there we were heading dead for the stern of the wreck.

Our boat was like a whaleman's, sharp at both ends and with a good spring. She was a kind of lifeboat, too, fitted with wooden, tubular, air-tight casings. She topped the seas like a cork, and yet at the first start the height and volume of the waves made me forget the wreck. I could think of nothing but our situation. At one moment we were in a hollow, in a dead calm, with the foam of the summit of the mountain of water behind us blowing like a flight of white-breasted sea - birds high over our heads ; the next we were on the top of the huge surge, the boat end on, the bowman right over my head, and a chasm behind us that was like looking down a precipice.

However, with a strong effort of will, I drew my mind away from all this, and fixed my attention on the wreck, where I beheld the poor creatures engaged in unlashng themselves ; whilst one of them, grasping the woman, was crawling along, and shoving her as he went to the extremity of the deck-

house, where a short ladder would enable them to reach the taffrail. Happily the wreck lay so very low in the water that it would be nothing of a jump from her into the boat. I sung out to the man who pulled the bow oar to make ready to catch the woman, and at the same time I told the other fellows to lay upon their oars, as the boat had way enough, and stand by to back water when we got under the stern of the wreck, so that we should not shoot past too rapidly.

Yet never was nicer steering wanted than now ; for if I directed the boat too near the stern, there was the chance of a sea lifting us under her counter, and smashing us into staves ; whilst, on the other hand, if I gave the barque too wide a berth, the woman would never be able to reach us by jumping. I pulled myself together, and watched the send of the boat on the seas steadfastly. The woman stood on the taffrail, waiting for us, grasped by the man, who crouched down

behind her, with his hands locked in her dress. Every now and again a column of water ran up the barque's quarter, and smothered them, and I could see the woman at such moments beating the air with her hands, and then rubbing down her face, whilst her long black hair, that hung for a bit in its saturated state down her back, would lift, and then blow out straight upon the strong wind.

Calculating the distance as accurately as I could, I headed the boat so as to hit the water about five feet from the taffrail. The wind and the waves rushed us along. When about twenty feet distant I shouted to the men to bury their oars and stop our way somewhat. This was done, and then we were under the vessel's stern.

"Jump!" I shouted.

The woman, dashing back her hair, made a spring, with her arms outstretched. The bowman caught her, and the boat trembled as her body fell into his arms. In a moment

we had swept past the vessel, but the woman was safe in the bottom of the boat.

It was now necessary to row to windward in order to drop down again past the vessel's stern. It was tedious and perilous work, but there was no other way of rescuing the men. We should have been stove alongside the groaning and squelching hull, or chucked right on to her. But when we rounded to get to windward again there was just one moment when I believed we should say good-night to the world. The boat was flung up by a savage sea, that was shaped like a cone, and tossed into the air on the prong of this evil surge, as though Neptune had speared us with his trident, and was forking us aloft ; and the fellows who tugged at the oars, missing the water, swept the blades through the air, and fell head over heels off the thwarts. Yet this very accident was probably the saving of us ; for the weight of the men being in the bottom of

the boat kept her keel in the water, though as that sea ran roaring away under her a vertical line would have cut through her two gunwales.

After rowing a certain distance, I put the boat's head round again for the wreck ; and as we drifted close alongside the stern, we maintained our position there by means of backing water long enough to enable two of the three men to drop among us. Another struggle to windward, and another rowing past the wreck, enabled us to get the third man ; and, with our miserable freight lying in a silent heap in the bottom of the boat, we made for the schooner, that had gone away to leeward, and lay hove-to, waiting for us.

But only half our errand was accomplished, and the worst part remained. We had saved the unhappy people, but how were we to put them and ourselves aboard the yacht ? Every time we were spun up on top of a sea, I saw her plunging and

rolling under her reefed foresail, dipping her bows so deep that two-thirds of her rudder came out of water, and heeling over to leeward until it seemed that another foot of inclination would lay bare her keel ; and then down we would plump into a hollow, where there was not a breath of air, and nothing to be seen but the water toppling in mountains above us, and the sky, which we looked up at as though from the bottom of a well. The tumbling of the schooner on the one hand, and our own sickening sinkings and risings on the other hand, were pretty broad hints of the difficulty and dangerous job that lay before us. There was only one plan to adopt, and when we were close to the schooner it entered my head. Sir Mor-daunt and the ladies and Purchase, indeed everybody aboard the yacht, were intently watching us ; and in order that they should hear me, I steered as close to the stern of the schooner as I dared venture, and shouted at the top of my voice for them to reeve a

whip at the foreyard arm, and sway us aboard, as that would be our only chance of reaching the deck ; and I also bawled to them to heave us a line, which I protest none of them seemed to think of doing. Old Purchase appeared quite dazed, and stared at us like a fool, and we should have been swept away to leeward by the wind and sea like smoke, if the fellow who held the wheel had not let go of it, and swung a coil of rope at us, the end of which was cleverly caught by the bowman ; and presently we were riding at about ten feet distance from the vessel, our weather oars being kept overboard to hold the boat clear of the side.

In a few minutes a whip was rove at the foreyard-arm, with a guy, leading over the bulwark rail, to steady it. "A bowline on the bite," as it is called, was made at the end of it, and the man on the yard overhauled the whip until the bowline came to our hands. The woman was raised and the

bowline slipped over her, and, watching our chance, I shouted to the people aboard the schooner to sway away. The poor creature shrieked as she was swept out of the boat into the air ; and never shall I forget her appearance as she swung aloft a few moments, with her gown rattling upon the wind like a flag, and her hair streaming out, and her arms tossing wildly. I recollected Miss Tuke saying that she hoped we should meet with adventures, and I wondered what she would think of *this* as an incident. It was like seeing a person hanged. I believe the woman had been unconscious to the moment of the men lifting her up to pass the bowline over her shoulders, and no wonder the poor soul kept screaming, if, as I suppose, she only recovered her sensibility to find herself hanging over the foaming water at a height of sixteen or eighteen feet.

But the guy was manned, and she was carefully drawn on board ; and very quickly the bowline was again overhauled into the

boat, and one of the shipwrecked men fitted into it and sent aloft.

The relation of this business is easy enough, but the acting in it was a tremendous experience. First, we had the utmost difficulty to keep the boat from swinging away from, or sheering against, the yacht's side. We had all to crouch low in her, and do our work as we squatted in her bottom, for fear of oversetting her. As the seas passed under her she would lean over and keep us breathless; and one moment she would be hovering on the summit of a sea that gave us a clear view of the foaming waters beyond the yacht's decks, and the next, the yacht had vanished, and nothing was visible but the wall of green water that sparkled and hissed and roared between her and us. On the other hand, the rolling of the yacht's masts tautened and slackened the bowline so wildly that it was a real agony to wait for and mark the moment when to sway away. I myself narrowly missed an ugly

ducking, not to mention a broken limb ; for all the shipwrecked men having been got aboard, Tripshore insisted on my going next, whereupon the bowline was caught with plenty of slack, and tossed over my shoulders. I gave the order myself to hoist up, and whether from flurry or worry chose the wrong moment, *i.e.*, when the boat was at the bottom of a sea instead of being on the top of it ; the result of which was, I found myself travelling into the air with the boat and the sea in full chase of me, and coming much faster than I was going. Fortunately a swing of the yacht cleared me of the boat, which, had she struck my legs, must have broken them ; the boiling water rose to within half a dozen inches of my feet and then subsided, leaving me swinging over a huge roaring hollow. However, before I could completely realise my position, they had swayed me over the bulwarks, and with a hearty thrill of delight I once more felt the solid deck under my feet.

Sir Mordaunt wrung my hand, and was

good enough to compliment me warmly on the manner in which the rescue had been effected. He told me that his wife and niece were below with the woman, and begged me to go and change my clothes, which were indeed wet through. But this I answered I would not do until I had seen the men aboard and the boat at the davits. In a manner I felt responsible for their safety, more especially as Tripshore remained in the boat to hook her on, leaving nobody in command but Purchase, whose inactivity during our return from the wreck had by no means improved my opinion of him as a seaman.

When all the men but Tripshore were dragged over the side, the boat was dropped astern and carefully hauled under the davits. All hands came aft and tailed on to the falls, but before the boat was alongside I flung the end of a bowline into her, and shouted to Tripshore to put it under his arms, so that, should he fall overboard, we could fish him up without trouble. This undoubtedly eased

the man's mind, and made him work more coolly. And certainly never did he stand in greater need of his nerves, for nothing but a steady eye and nimble hand could have saved the boat, that, as the yacht leaned down, rose to a level with her rail, and then sunk below under the bends, until I had to fork my head over the side to see her.

"Hoist away!" And the boat came up hand over hand.

"Thank God for that!" said I, as the falls were belayed, and Tripshore, throwing off the bowline, jumped on to the deck. "Now, Sir Mordaunt, I'll go and shift my clothes;" and down I bundled, exulting as any man would over our successful exploit.

There was nobody in the cabin, but I heard voices in Carey's berth as I passed to my own, and supposed that the ladies had carried the poor woman there, and were giving her a dry outfit. I made short work over my own togger, and in five minutes was on deck again, by which time the reefed

mainsail had been hoisted, and the yacht was breaking the seas as she started afresh on her cruise. The wreck was broad on the weather quarter, and I stood in the companion, looking at her. There is no inanimate object that appeals so pathetically to the feelings as a deserted wreck, tossing upon the high seas. Shorn of her beauty, her masts broken, her rigging trailing in confused heaps, surrounded by the great ocean that makes her desolation supreme, she resembles a dying creature: she seems to know her fate, and to be faintly struggling to save herself from vanishing in the fathomless grave that slowly sucks her down. The sunshine flying between the clouds flashed in the snow-storms of spray which were hurled over the almost submerged hull; the foreyard swayed wildly, like a beckoning arm entreating us to stay; and here and there along her side black fragments of bulwark stanchions or such things stood out when the coils of green water had poured

from her decks and left them exposed ; and they so resembled motionless human beings, standing drowned and supported by their death-grip, that it was impossible to behold the illusion without a thrill.

Old Purchase stood near the wheel, looking very dogged and sullen, but Sir Mordaunt was not on deck. Catching sight of the steward, I called to know where the baronet was. He replied that Sir Mordaunt was in the forecastle, seeing to the shipwrecked men. I went to the forecastle hatch and sung out to know if I might step down.

"Come along, Walton, come along!" shouted Sir Mordaunt ; so I stuck my toes into the up-and-down ladder and dropped into the forecastle.

This was my first visit to this part of the vessel, and I was surprised by the roominess of the interior, considering the tonnage of the yacht. There was a double row of bunks on either hand, a good-sized square table that travelled on stanchions, so that it could be

hoisted up out of the way when not wanted, with lockers around. The deck was white, everything very clean, and the place in excellent order. But you felt the motion here as it was to be felt in no other part. It was like standing at one end of a see-saw plank, and the jump was often sharp enough to make one reel. The roll of the bow wave, and the sound of the solid surges smiting the resonant fabric and recoiling in a smothered hissing and seething, might have passed for a thunder-storm heard in a cellar.

The three men whom we had rescued sat at the table, eating with slow motions and yet with a kind of avidity that was made distressing to witness by their languor, which was that of men in the last stage of exhaustion. Such of the yacht's crew as were below stood at a respectful distance looking on, whilst Sir Mordaunt leaned with one hand upon the table, talking to the poor fellows and encouraging them. They all three threw down their knives when they

saw me and rose very shakily from their seats, and whilst they extended their hands for me to grasp, thanked me in broken tones, and one of them with the tears gushing out of his eyes, for having saved their lives. I was quite unprepared for this, and for a moment was unmanned by their pitiful faces, and the corpse-like drooping of their figures, and by the low, melancholy pitch of their voices, which quivered with emotion.

In the hurry and anxiety of the rescue I had taken no notice of their appearance ; as they jumped into the boat they had been let to lie in the bottom, where of course from my place aft I had not been able to see them. I now ran my eyes over them, and never was the cruel usage that the sea gives to men whom it has mastered more lamentably illustrated than by these figures. It is true they had got on some dry clothes, lent them by the yachtsmen, but their faces were most miserable to see. The fire of famine and mental suffering sparkled in their deep-sunk

eyes ; their lips were white, and were scarcely defined upon their flesh ; their cheeks were hollow, and there were excoriations, which looked like burns or scaldings, upon different parts of their faces ; whilst their nerveless, shaking hands resembled fat or wax, swelled up and made to look like lepers' hands by the salt and the ceaseless washing.

I sat down opposite them, and Sir Mor-daunt said :—

"Their vessel was the *Wanderer*, bound from Pensacola to Liverpool. They had been four days in their awful plight, Walton, when we rescued them."

"Do you mean four days without victuals or drink ?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, so help me God !" answered one of them, in a hollow broken voice. "We got caught in a gale o' wind that almost knocked us to pieces, and in that same gale we started a butt, I reckon, for the water came in fast and drowned the vessel."

"What has become of the rest of the crew ?" I asked.

"Why," answered another man—he that had cried when he took my hand—"the gale left us only one boat, and we got that overboard, and all hands crawled into her. But afore we could get her clear, a sea chucked us against the ship's side and stove us. Three of us got on deck, and I caught the woman by the hair—she's the captain's wife, sir—and dragged her up. All the rest went down. We heard them screamin', but we could do nothing, and it was soon over."

"Did you sight nothing in those four days," I inquired.

"Ay, a big steamer passed us—she must have seen us—but she never stopped," replied the other man; one answering after the other, in turns, as though they felt the need of relieving one another.

"You were right, you see, Sir Mordaunt," said I in a low voice; "that mirage was surely a heaven-directed signal."

And I own when I looked at those men, and reflected that but for that mirage we

should never have sighted the wreck, I perceived so clearly the will of God in the adventure, that I sat awhile silent and awed by the wonder and mercifulness of it, and by the closeness it brought me to an act of the Creator that made the Divine operation, if I may so say, a visible thing.

We stayed about ten minutes talking to the men, in the course of which I gathered that the crew had originally consisted of fourteen souls, and that these men who were saved were able seamen ; that their ship was only two years old, and her cargo worth a deal of money ; but that nothing could have resisted the gale that struck them, which, from their description, I took to be a cyclone, of which the skipper must have headed his ship into the very thickest and most dangerous part, in ignorance, perhaps, of the nature of those rotary storms. I advised the poor creatures to turn in and sleep as long as they could, and Sir Mordaunt and I came away.

He held my arm as we walked slowly aft. He was much affected, and could hardly speak for some moments.

"Oh, Walton," he exclaimed, presently, "how little people ashore know of what goes on at sea! How impossible it is to understand the horrors of shipwreck without experiencing it, or beholding it in its dreadful reality, as we have!" And he extended his hand as he said this towards the water-logged barque, that was now a long way astern, and scarcely to be seen amid the spray that dashed over her and veiled the ruins of her spars. "When I went into the forecastle, one of my crew whispered to me that at the sight of the food two of the shipwrecked men burst out crying. It will not bear thinking of. I have never been brought face to face with human misery like this before."

"Nay, don't let us bother over it," said I. "The men will do, and the ladies will no doubt pull the poor woman through."

That's a capital boat of yours. No ordinary quarter-boat could have lived in this sea." And I looked at the running and splashing and hissing surges, which sometimes swelled up white with the foam of our driving stem to within a foot of the bulwark rail, and leaped and sparkled far as the eye could reach, banding the deep with a rugged circle; while over the frothing waters the cloud shadows sped in rushing crowds, making the wild, free, streaming leagues of water piebald with violet patches and the sunlight's white splendour.

I put my head into the skylight to see if breakfast was ready, and perceived the dishes on the table and the steward in the act of reaching for his bell. Indeed, the job of saving the shipwrecked men had occupied more time in performing than it takes in reading about it. It made me wonder to think how long we had been in the boat and among the seas, for, though it had not seemed a long while to me, it was hard

upon an hour and a half from the time of our quitting the yacht to the moment of hoisting the boat to the davits.

Lady Brookes and Miss Tuke and Norie entered the cabin as we went down the companion steps, and I was rather taken aback by Miss Tuke coming up to me, with her hand outstretched, and telling me that I had acted "as a real sailor would," and the like. I thanked her for her good words, and there stopped, secretly relishing these compliments too much from *her* to deprecate them, and yet not wanting the action to take one particle more of significance than it deserved.

"Here at last is a real adventure for you," said I. "Already the *Lady Maud* has saved five lives—counting the Cockney we found adrift in the Channel as one. But the poor woman—how is she?"

"Oh, Mordaunt," exclaimed Lady Brookes, answering the question by addressing her husband, "she is such a poor, delicate crea-

ture. Her husband was the captain, and he was drowned with the others when the boat upset. She was starving and ravenous, and yet she could not swallow, and she might have died with the food before her, for the want of being able to swallow, if Mr. Norie had not made her drink water with every mouthful."

"To bring the muscles into play," said Norie.

"Well; but what has become of her? is she in bed?" asked Sir Mordaunt.

"Yes; in Carey's bed," answered her ladyship.

Good Sir Mordaunt heaved a sigh. "Think of the poor creature exposed for four days and nights to the seas breaking over that sunken hull! How can flesh and blood bear such suffering? And her mental anguish!"

"*There* you hit the worst part of shipwreck," said I. "It is not the hunger and thirst only, it is the thoughts of your own

lonely, miserable doom, the friends far away, who may never know what has become of you, the memory of the people who have been drowned in your sight——”

Here Sir Mordaunt interrupted.

“Pray, Walton, hand me one of those eggs;” and he winked ferociously.

“Oh, Mordaunt!” cried Lady Brookes, hysterically, “I wish we were safe at home!”

“Are you not as safe here?” he replied. “Come, come, my love, don’t let the shipwreck trouble you.”

“It’s no more than passing a tombstone in a journey,” said I. “That wreck means just as much as a grave that your eye lights on as you drive along in a carriage.”

“Just as much and just as little,” exclaimed Norie. “It points a moral, of course. But who’s afraid?”

“You have not seen the woman, Mr. Walton,” said her ladyship, in a trembling voice, and very pale. “Mordaunt, her eyes

were like live coals, and you should have seen her as Ada and Mr. Norie supported her through the cabin, with her long black hair as wet as seaweed plastered over her hollow face!" She hid her eyes in her hand, and shuddered violently, whilst Sir Mordaunt looked at me with a melancholy shake of the head, as though he would say, "I was afraid of this from the beginning."

We went on with our breakfast in silence, none of us in particularly high spirits, and we certainly did not stand in need of any emotional outbreak in Lady Brookes to depress us. For my own part, I was beginning to feel the effects of the excitement and anxiety of the time spent in the boat, many years having passed since I had been engaged in so rough and hazardous an adventure, and my training ashore had not been of a kind to enable me to support such an experience very sturdily; so, when breakfast was over I went to my cabin, and threw myself on the bed, meaning merely

to rest myself, instead of which I fell asleep.

For three hours I slept, and when I awoke I felt buoyant with the refreshment of that sleep. It was still blowing very fresh, and the sea was high, and the yacht plunging over the surges, and frothing the water for a league away astern of her, and driving through it nobly under a treble-reefed main-sail and standing-jib, the gaff-foresail having been taken in whilst I was below. The sun was high, and all the clouds gone. Indeed, the sight of that strong sea, and the sound of the wild wind storming through the rigging, and all overhead a liquid, beautiful, tropical azure, untarnished by the smallest puff of vapour, made me pause when I had gained the top of the companion-steps, and look up with wonder. It was more like being off the west coast of South America, where heavy gales rage under blue skies, than in the North Atlantic.

But what a scene of brilliance was the

sea ! The beams of the high sun made a mirror of the whole surface of it. The flash and quiver of foam alternated with the poisoning coils of glittering water, and every wave that broke flung up a great shower of spray that fled ahead of it on the wings of the wind like a torn veil of silver thread, so that the whole expanse of the leaping, boiling, sweeping, and seething deep was covered with this flying mist of salt, which sparkled like jewels in the glorious sunshine, and flung a rainbow-like radiance over the face of the ocean. The clearance of the sky might have been accounted for by the wind having shifted a couple of points to the northward. This shift was good for our comfort by diminishing the angle of the deck ; but though the schooner showed but few cloths, the pressure made her tremble as she ran, and it was like watching the bottom of a waterfall, where the cascade meets the rushing stream, to see the water shoot up at her bows and fly clear of her decks in an

avalanche of snow, and strike the hissing seas twenty fathoms to leeward of her.

I found Norie reading to Miss Tuke, she sitting and listening, with her hands folded and her eyes half closed. I thought him lucky to be able to read well enough to engage her attention. Sir Mordaunt stood alone, looking at the sea.

"I'm glad indeed, Walton," said he, "that I made no objection to your going off to the wreck. The poor creatures must have perished had we carried out Purchase's idea, and waited for the wind to go down. But you acted bravely, Walton, very bravely, and I am proud that my men should have backed you so well. They shall not go unrewarded."

"Praise them as much as you please," said I. "They deserve encouragement. But let us have no more about my part of the undertaking. Why, is not that one of the shipwrecked fellows yonder?"

And there, sure enough, just to leeward of

the foremast, was the first of the men who had jumped from the wreck. He was squatting on his hams, and smoked a short pipe, the bowl of which was inverted, and around him stood a group of the *Lady Maud's* men, listening to his yarn with rapt attention, their figures swaying to the motion of the vessel. He was like Coleridge's ancient mariner, with his glittering eye and pale forefinger, which he scored the air with as he talked.

"I've been watching him," said Sir Mordaunt, "and wondering what we are to do with the poor creatures. We must keep them, I suppose, until we arrive at Kingston, and God knows they are heartily welcome."

"Unless we fall in with a homeward bound ship," said I.

"To be sure; and then we can transfer them. I had never thought of that."

Just then the man caught sight of me. He instantly stood up, and pulled off his hat. I beckoned to him. He rammed his

finger into the pipe-bowl he was smoking, and, thrusting the pipe into his breeches pocket, came aft. I wish I could describe his manner ; the working of his pinched and hollow features ; the twitching of his hands, as though he would embrace me ; and the speaking and moving expression of gratitude that softened and humanised his eyes, though, but for that look, the fires which famine and anguish of mind had kindled in them, and which still burned there, would have made them shocking to see.

"I am glad you are hearty enough to be about," said I. "But it would be better for you to keep to your bunk, I think. After what you have gone through, you want rest quite as much as food."

"I can't rest, sir ; I can't be still," he answered. "It's fearful to be quiet and shut my eyes, for then it's all happening over again. No ; I'd rather be on deck, sir—leastways if you don't wish otherwise. God bless you, sir."

"How are your mates?"

"Sleeping like dead men, sir. But talking and keeping my mind going does me more good than sleeping," said he, quickly, as if afraid that his reference to his mates would make us send him below.

I now told him that it was our intention to put him and the others aboard the first homeward-bound ship we should meet that would take them; and that if we failed to meet with such a vessel, we should land them at some West Indian port, most probably Kingston.

"But we'll take care to land you where you will find a ship to carry you home," said Sir Mordaunt.

The poor fellow was very grateful, and thanked us humbly for our kindness. Miss Tuke left Norie alone with his book, and joined us as we talked to the man, and spoke to him in a way that reminded me of that night in the Channel, when she stood soothing and cheering the fellow we

had found in the boat. There was no affectation in her sympathy and liking for sailors. She saw further into their life than most girls would, and found something to move her in the thoughts of the great mysterious ocean into which Jack sails, and the lonesomeness and suffering of the fate that often befalls him. Here, now, was a figure that would have affected a more insensible heart than hers. Suffering such as this sailor and his mates had endured gives a kind of sanctity or mystery to a man, and the compassion he excited was mixed with an awe that was not to be hindered by his rough speech and broken-down bearing.

I was somewhat surprised that Sir Mordaunt made no further reference to the part old Purchase had taken in the business of the rescue. I thought he would have coupled his unsailorly half-heartedness on that occasion with his grogginess on the preceding evening, and found the two

strong enough to support a prejudice. I did not even know whether he had spoken to the man about his trick of overdoing his drams, nor would I inquire. A conversation might have taken place between them when I was asleep, and Purchase would of course know what excuses and what promises to make, and what to say for having opposed the sending of a boat to the wreck. As Sir Mordaunt said nothing about him, I considered it would be an intrusion if I volunteered any further opinion on him in his capacity as skipper. But this self-imposed reticence of mine only served to increase my distrust and harden my contempt of the old man as a seaman.

It was not until the evening of the day of the rescue that I saw the woman whom we had saved. It was after dinner. I had been smoking a pipe on deck, enjoying the headlong wind that showed no sign of abating, and that was driving us foaming and dancing athwart the parallels towards

the Trade-wind, and promising us a fast and noble run to the West Indies. I stepped below to refill my pipe, and, on entering the cabin, saw the woman sitting in an armchair, talking to Lady Brookes and Miss Tuke.

She looked at me vacantly, not remembering my face ; but when Lady Brookes (who had recovered her spirits, and given up lamenting—for a spell—that she was not ashore) said, "This is Mr. Walton, the gentleman who steered the boat," she jumped up, and grasping my right hand in both hers, kissed it again and again, and when she let it go it was wet with her tears.

Although she was very wan, with the aspect of emaciation that characterized the three seamen, she was certainly not so formidable as the picture that Lady Brookes drew of her at breakfast had led me to suppose. Her hair was brushed and braided — it was black as ebony and very abundant

—and the bight of the braided loops fell low on her back. She had exchanged her torn and soaking gown for a dress belonging to Miss Tuke; and I perceived that she possessed a figure that suffered nothing even from contrast with Lady Brookes' fine shape. She was of the middle height, and I thought that when health had coloured her lips and cheeks afresh, and filled out her face, she would turn out to be a handsome woman. Her age apparently did not exceed six or seven and twenty years, and she did not look older than that now, in spite of what she had gone through. I also noticed what I was hardly likely to perceive when I had heard her voice amid the thunder of the wind and the cannonading of the surges storming the dismantled wreck—I mean, that she was Irish. Her accent was very rich, but educated, so that there was nothing in it that I could illustrate by spelling. There was plaintiveness and winning and drawing music in her tones, as she poured forth

her thanks to me, with the bright tears flowing down her hollow face. But it would be idle to write down her words; for, greatly as they moved me, yet the pathos of her gratitude was rather in her eyes, in the motion of her hands, in the soft vibration and varying harmonies of her voice.

"Will you call my husband, Mr. Walton?" said Lady Brookes. "He does not know that Mrs. Stretton"—for that was the woman's name, it seemed—"has left her cabin."

Forthwith I summoned my friend, who got up from under the weather bulwark, where he was smoking, and, throwing his cigar overboard, followed me into the cabin. There was a bland, consoling courtesy in the manner in which he took the woman's hand and spoke to her, that was incomparable in its way. He put fifty inquiries to her about her strength and health and the like, and wound up by letting fall her

hand and raising his own, and thanking God, with lifted eyes, that his yacht had been the means of saving the lives of the sufferers.

He then spoke to her of his proposal of transferring her and the men to a homeward-bound ship ; or, failing that, of landing them at Kingston, in Jamaica.

"Are you going to Kingston ?" she asked eagerly.

He answered that he had not intended at first to put into any port ; but that the yacht would probably have to touch somewhere for fresh water, and that he would choose Kingston, for the sake of the magnificent scenery of Jamaica.

"I have a brother-in-law who is a shipping agent in Kingston," said she, still speaking anxiously, but in a subdued voice ; and she was proceeding, but stopped, with a look of embarrassment.

"In that case," said Sir Mordaunt immediately, seeing, as we all did, indeed, the

reason of her hesitation, "we will gladly decide to carry you to Kingston."

"You are very, very good, sir. I should not have had the boldness to ask so great a favour. Indeed, such kindness following my trial is more than I can bear;" and the poor thing again burst into tears, and cried and sobbed most piteously.

Sir Mordaunt was just the man to be affected by a woman's tears; and while she cried, he kept his face hung, and his features worked as if he would cry too. Miss Tuke, by way of diverting all this sorrow, led the poor young widow to tell her story to Sir Mordaunt. I thought at first that this was like putting her on the rack, but speedily saw that it did her good to talk of her troubles.

She had only been married a few months, she said; indeed, she married her husband in the very week the barque sailed from Liverpool. We all sat listening with a kind of fascination whilst she told the story of

the gale and the wreck and the capsizing of the boat, by which all the people but four perished. The muffled roar of the sea outside; the sharp shrieking of the wind in the rigging—which latter sound echoed in clear notes down the skylight and companion; the wild lifting and plunging of the schooner; the creak and grind of timbers and bulkheads; the quick dislocating jumping of the swinging-trays and the rattle of the firearms in the rack; and the significant patter of spray, like a heavy fall of hail upon the deck; gave such a colour to her narrative as kept us all hearkening with rapt attention to her round and fluent accents, made passionately plaintive by the horrors of her memory. I think I see the picture now: Lady Brookes, watching the speaker, with her black eyes all ashine, and her hands tightly folded, and her lips compressed, and her brows gathered; Miss Tuke, full of sympathy and wonder and fear; Sir Mordaunt, supporting himself by the table,

balancing his tall figure to the heavy lurches, smoothing down his beard, sometimes looking at the woman and sometimes around him at us, with an expression of consternation ; I, full of hearty pity for the poor bereaved soul, who sat telling her story with dramatic power, but utterly unconscious of the effect she produced—clasping or extending her hands, one moment sinking her voice, until we had to lean forward to hear her, then wildly exclaiming, then stopping to cry.

She made me shudder when she came to the starving part of her story. In the evening light her features were as white as death, and her fiery black eyes were something to shine in the face of the very spirit of Famine. That day of the thunder-storm was the third of their sufferings, and the calm was a long agony to the parched and helpless and hopeless wretches. The froth stood upon the lips of the men, and one of them put his teeth to his arm, but his heart failed him ; and as she told us this, carried away by the previous

memory, and anxious that we should fully grasp the anguish we had released them from, she acted the thing—raised her arm to her lips, with her burning eyes fixed on Lady Brookes' face as she did it ; whereupon, with a sudden choking cry, her ladyship started to her feet and fell in a dead swoon in the arms of her husband.

Poor Mrs. Stretton was panic-stricken by the effect of her story. " Oh, it is my fault—it is my fault ! How rash I am—how wicked ! " she cried, and sprang to Lady Brookes' side, and kissed her hand, and committed a hundred extravagances of grief, whilst I tumbled upon deck to fetch Norie, whom we had left there watching the sea, and quite unconscious of the thrilling drama that was enacting below.

" I say, Sir Mordaunt," exclaimed the doctor—as he bent over the unconscious woman, who lay upon the floor, with her head on Miss Tuke's lap, whilst her husband swabbed her face with toilet vinegar or

something of that kind, and Mrs. Stretton (whose ability to move at all after what she had gone through was amazing to me) grovelled on her knees with a smelling-bottle, which she held to Lady Brookes' nose—"this won't do. If her ladyship is to be sent into fainting fits in this fashion, I'll not answer for her life."

Sir Mordaunt made no answer, but he looked terribly grieved and upset. After the regulation quantity of slopping and slapping, Lady Brookes came to, and was carried off to her berth in state, Miss Tuke heading the procession, Sir Mordaunt and Norie holding each an arm of her ladyship, and cutting fantastic figures as they toppled to and fro upon the heaving and bounding deck, and Carey the maid and the unhappy captain's wife bringing up the rear.

Glad to be quit of the business, I went on deck, where I found Tripshore, with whom I had a long yarn over the incident of the morning; and when I had done with him I

had the deck to myself for half an hour, though from time to time I would find myself taking a furtive squint down the skylight, to see if Miss Tuke were coming my way, for I was growing sentimental enough about that girl not only to enjoy her company, not only to relish the occasional snub she bestowed on Norie and any half-suppressed impatience of him that she exhibited when he drew alongside of her, but even to indulge in fond and foolish dreams of the future.

If this confession, however, makes it appear that I was in love, then more is conveyed than is true. I was not in love with Ada Tuke. I was only warming up towards her. I enjoyed thinking of her, and I dwelt upon the possibility of my falling in love with her as an agreeable dream that might one day be realized. Any young fellow who has been boxed up for some weeks with a pretty girl in a vessel will understand what I mean. A man rarely falls seriously in

love with a girl at sea. He plays round and round the emotion, warms himself by it, and enjoys its light; but he seldom or never burns his wings. He waits till he gets ashore to do that. The steady earth helps him to concentrate himself. At sea the tumblification keeps him diffused.

For that half-hour, however, I managed to do very well alone. The sea was a noble companion, and the voice of the strong clear gale overhead full of eloquent meaning. The night had fallen, but it was most brilliant with stars. They lay as thick as dust, and the planets looked like little moons, so round and full of light were they, so bland and large and serene and steady. Now and again a meteor, that filled the sky all round it with light, like the showering of a port-fire, would sail athwart those stars, and puff and vanish in a smoke of spangles. The sea was a magnificent sight, all ashine with fire. The summit of every surge was luminous, and in the hollows the greenish

streaks flashed and faded in cloudy radiance like brimstone. I could see the phosphorus sparkling upon the forecastle as the yacht dipped and shipped a smother of water over her weather bow ; and sometimes, when the surges ran up her without breaking, and fled along with the strong wind over the vessel's nose without touching her, the air all that way seemed on fire with the bright rush. Indeed, it was blowing hard. If the *Dido* had this wind she would be under double-reefed topsails. The brave little schooner stormed grandly through the pelting surges, swelling out the foam by half her own length ahead of her every time she dropped a curtsey, and sending the black and shining water hissing and roaring away to windward of her, and sweeping it astern into a wake that might have served for a thousand-ton ship.

I stood for nearly a quarter of an hour watching that wake rushing away from me, full of whirling and eddying fires, into the

leaping leagues of darkness, and listening to the clank and jerking of the wheel-chains, and the booming of the wind in the hollow of the drum-like mainsail, and the crashing of waters to right and left as they soared and coiled over and broke into wildernesses of snow under their own weight.

CHAPTER II.

BUT this fine wind did not last through the night. When I came on deck at eight o'clock next morning the wind was away in the south-east, a gentle breeze, and the swell of the sea fast going down. There was a small barque on the lee horizon, standing to the north, too far off to be of any use to us for transshipping the wrecked men. She remained in sight until after breakfast, and seeing her put it into Sir Mordaunt's head to call the three men aft and talk to them.

They presently arrived, and I was struck to see how the rest and the food had pulled them together. Sir Mordaunt at once told them that he had consented to carry Mrs. Stretton to Kingston, where she had friends;

that if they liked the notion of going as far as Kingston he would convey them there, but they must decide. He would either take them to Jamaica or transfer them to the first homeward-bound ship we could signal. What was their choice ?

After looking at one another, and talking awhile among themselves, they replied that they would rather be put aboard some homeward-bound ship ; they were strangers to Jamaica ; had no idea of what chances there were of getting a ship that way ; whereas at Liverpool there was a tidy bit of money for them to take up as wages, and scores of vessels in want of hands.

" But we hope you'll make use of us whilst we're with you, sir," added the fellow who had acted as spokesman. " We're willing to turn to and do any mortal thing we're put to. It worries my mates as much as it do me, sir, to know how to show ourselves grateful ; for merely thanking of you, and calling blessings on you and your party, sir,

don't carry the meaning in our hearts half as fur as we want it to go."

"There's no occasion for you to work," answered Sir Mordaunt. "We have plenty of men. As for gratitude, you have already thanked us enough. Your business is to take rest, and recover your strength and spirits."

And so that matter ended, and the poor fellows went forward.

In obedience to Norie's injunctions it was agreed among all us people aft not again to refer to the wreck before Lady Brookes, nor indeed to speak upon any topic in her presence that was at all likely to capsize her nerves. Norie told me in confidence that the action of her heart was weak, and that a fainting fit might end in death. "I don't want to go into the matter with her husband," said he, "for fear of distressing him; but we owe it to them both to keep her mind cheerful. And I have told Mrs. Stretton to avoid all reference to her trials as she

would poison, though, poor creature! it's rather too much to expect her to look easy, with her husband drowned a few days ago, and with the memory of ninety-six hours of famine and salt-water scouring to fill up her mind."

"Is this cruise doing Lady Brookes any good, think you?" I asked.

"Certainly it is," he answered. "But hysterics and swooning put her back."

"But it was the lightning that sent her into hysterics," said I. "We can't prevent thunder-storms from gathering."

"Why, that's true enough," said he. "But a thunder-storm isn't always happening; whereas, if I had not put you on your guard, the wreck would find you all in talk for the next fortnight, and every meal would be embellished by allusions to drowned bodies, storm-swept decks, starving men languishing to swallow their own bones, and other light and pleasing topics of that kind."

Nothing particular happened that day.

Indeed, it was one of the quietest days we had passed. Lady Brookes kept her cabin, and her husband was nearly the whole time with her. I saw very little of Miss Tuke, very little of the doctor, nothing at all of Mrs. Stretton. After the thunder-storm, and the strong wind, and the excitement of the wreck, the calm weather fell like a pause upon us all; and when we met at meals, I noticed an unusual gravity of manner in Sir Mordaunt and his wife and Miss Tuke, so much so that the meals that day were the dullest we had sat down to: even Norie seemed to have lost his tongue.

At dinner I asked what arrangements had been made for Mrs. Stretton's accommodation, and was told that she would share Carey's berth, and take her meals with her.

"She said she would rather not join us here," said the baronet, "although I pressed her to give us her company. This shows a very modest, retiring character. Yet what pleases her should please us."

However, some time after, Norie told me that he had taken the young widow aside, and begged her to keep as much as possible for the present out of Lady Brookes' sight—to wait until the recollection of the shipwreck should have faded out of her ladyship's mind. He said that Miss Tuke had told him of the dramatic power with which Mrs. Stretton had related her story, and said he: "You see, Walton, that though she might promise not to talk so graphically again before Lady Brookes, she might forget her vows should the conversation drift towards her sufferings and widowed and destitute condition—for I suppose you know that her husband's death leaves her penniless?—and it is my duty as medical adviser to protect Lady Brookes against all risks of further 'capsizals,' as you call them."

To all this I made no answer; but I could not help thinking he bade fair to make a fool of his patient by humouring her gimcrack nerves in this way.

The morning of the fifth day, dating from the rescue of the shipwrecked people, broke in a dead calm. I came on deck about an hour and a half after the sun had risen, and found the sea like a lake, though heaving softly with a light swell that ran languidly along the path of the sun. Glancing aft, I saw a female figure standing at the bulwarks, leaning her face on her elbows and looking into the water. I believed for the moment that it was Miss Tuke; but hearing me, she looked round, and then I perceived that it was Mrs. Stretton.

In all those days I had only seen her once, and then I had caught but a glimpse of her down the skylight as she passed through the cabin. Consequently I was very greatly astonished by the change that had been wrought in her appearance. She was no longer the wild, white, haggard woman we had rescued. Pale indeed she was, but her cheeks had plumped out, her lips were red, the hollows under her eyes

had filled up, and lost their livid tint. Her fine black eyes flashed back the sunshine, and were beautifully clear and soft as a gazelle's, with a rich expression of melancholy. She wore one of Miss Tuke's dresses. I could not describe it, for the life of me; but though a dressmaker would have given her more room about the bosom, her scissors could not have cut the dress more finely into the waist, and furnished a more free and sweeping incurving down the back.

Indeed, I was so much surprised by the change, and by this apparition of a picturesquely handsome woman rising up, so to speak, out of the ashes of the deplorable figure we had rescued—shrieking as it was swayed into the air over the boiling water, with its black tresses floating like a burst of smoke from her head upon the gale—that I fairly hung in the wind as she came up to me, with both hands extended, and could scarcely answer her cordial greeting, melo-

dised by the Irish accent I have spoken of ; nor am I certain that I didn't blush.

"Why, Mrs. Stretton," said I, "if I had met you ashore in a crowd, I believe I should not have known you."

"Oh yes, I am recovering my health ; I wish I could say my spirits," she answered.

"I hope you are pretty comfortable below ?" said I.

"I meet with nothing but kindness," she replied, looking as if she would cry. "I thank God for finding such friends. I believe my sorrows would have broken my heart had I been thrown among rough people. For, oh, Mr. Walton ! I loved my husband ! I miss him so much—so much !"

I said nothing, for in the face of a sorrow of this kind it is best to be quiet. To give her time to rally, I went to the compass, though there was no use looking at it, for there was not a breath of air, and the swell had swung the schooner with her head to the north ; and then I went to the taffrail,

where I had not stood a moment when my eye was attracted by a shark lying close under our counter, motionless as a log of wood, near enough to the surface to allow about an inch of his dorsal fin to fork out through the oil-like blue of the water, and to enable me to see his eyes, which methought he raised with a most languishing expression, as though he said, "If you *would* but oblige me, and tumble overboard, my dear sir."

This was a sight, I thought, that should divert the widow's grief. So I called to her. "Mrs. Stretton, pray come and look here. Here's something that should be feminine, for I reckon it twigs my sex, by the way it ogles me."

She came along quietly, and looked over; but she had barely glanced at it when the creature slowly sank, but without any perceptible motion of the fins or tail, drawing down and fading until it was indistinguishable in the clear, azure, fathomless profound.

"Doesn't that prove what the brute's gender is? You perceive she vanishes at the sight of a woman," said I, wanting to see a smile upon my companion's face.

But my joke missed fire. Her thoughts were evidently fathoms below me—with the corpse of her husband, I dare say, and I saw a tear drop with the flash of a diamond from her eyes into the sea. Just at that moment one of the mastiffs came up to us, and rubbed her hand with its cold moist snout. She cried out, and recoiled a yard, with as much stately horror as ever I saw in a tragedy actress. Her cheeks were as white as the deck, and her eyes on fire; but instead of laughing when she saw the dog, she put her hands to her face, and her bosom rose and fell vehemently.

"Get away, you brute!" said I, motioning the fine animal forward. "Mrs. Stretton, you are not the only person he has scared by his trick of shaking hands with his nose. That black snout of his once brought me

from the stars with a run, and made me whoop like an Indian."

As I said this, a pretty voice behind me exclaimed, "What's the matter, Mr. Walton?"

It was Miss Tuke. I wished her good-morning, and explained that Mrs. Stretton had been frightened by the mastiff.

"He frightened me, indeed," said the poor woman, apologetically; and then asking Miss Tuke what time it was, she said something about Carey waiting for her, and went below.

"You choose an early hour for flirting, Mr. Walton," said Miss Tuke, gravely.

I asked her what she said. She repeated her remark.

"But don't you know," said I, "that I am no longer a sailor—that is, a man who will flirt with anybody? When I am in a flirting mood I don't choose widows."

"Don't you think her a good-looking widow?" she asked.

"Yes, I do. I think her a handsome woman."

"And considering that you saved her life——" said she, pausing.

I was not displeased. "We were looking at a shark," I answered.

"But she had her hands to her face, and seemed very much agitated when I came on deck."

"Your kind heart is at fault for once," said I. "We had seen a shark. Let me find out if the creature is there still?" I peered over the taffrail. "No, he keeps out of sight, afraid that nobody will fall overboard if he shows himself. Well, Miss Tuke, when I saw the shark I called to Mrs. Stretton, and she came and looked. The shark faded into the depths, but the widow's imagination followed it, and went beyond it, as I may guess from a tear that fell from her eyes. Her thoughts were with her husband—the drowned body of her husband; and I have no doubt that her mind's eye

was upon the beloved face when the nose of the dog touched her hand. The sensation of that cold nose upon her hand, when her mind was full of her drowned love——"

"Oh, Mr. Walton, you have said enough. I am ashamed of myself. But you know I was joking."

"I hope you were," I answered, rather pointedly.

She blushed a bit, and said, "Don't you think Mrs. Stretton pretty?"

"Didn't I say yes just now to that same question?" I exclaimed, laughing out at her.

"If you had known how handsome she was, would you have been more anxious to save her?"

I thought it best to answer with a nod, at which she laughed heartily, and said—

"Now I wonder what can have become of the shark?"

I took another squint over the stern, but there was nothing to be seen of the fish.

"That's where the shark *was*," said I,

pointing. "Give him time, and, like hope in the human breast, he will rise, being of a hungry nature."

At this juncture arrived Sir Mordaunt. "Another dead calm," said he, sniffing and snuffling and addressing Tripshore, who had the watch till eight o'clock. Then trotting up to Miss Tuke and me, he wished us good-morning. "D'ye know," said he, "I doubt if we shall get a chance to send our shipwrecked men home. The Atlantic appears to have become a Dead Sea as regards ships. Why do we sight no steamers?"

"We should be in the track of some of them," I replied. "But we shall stand a better chance of meeting vessels soon, if your skipper's navigation is correct, for the Trades can't be far off."

"My dear Walton," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, "whenever you have occasion to mention Purchase you invariably speak as though you had not an atom of belief in the man's capacity."

"I have never concealed from you that my opinion of him is not a high one," I answered.

"Is it because he commands a yacht?"

"No no. Tripshore is a yachtsman, for the matter of that," said I; "but I think very well of Tripshore as a seaman."

"Why don't you find out what time it is by the sun, as Purchase does, Mr. Walton?" said Miss Tuke; "and then you'll be able to tell us if the man understands navigation."

"I don't want Walton to do anything of the kind," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "For myself, I have full confidence in Purchase, and I should be very sorry for him to suppose he had given me reason to distrust him as a navigator, which would certainly be his impression, Walton, if he saw you taking observations. Then again, Ada, if your aunt should see Walton with a sextant in his hand, she would imagine that Purchase did not know his business; and as she is already

prejudiced against the old man, you can guess how such a notion as that would worry her. And suppose Purchase, believing us all to have no confidence in him, should throw up his post in a fit of disgust? There would be a dilemma!"

"Not if Tripshore would take his place," said I.

"But Tripshore is not a navigator, Walton. He was only an able seaman. He has never passed an examination. I doubt if he could handle a quadrant."

"Well, so far as I am concerned," said I, "pray don't suppose that I want to check Purchase's working. The suggestion was Miss Tuke's, not mine. It's over ten years since I took an observation, and I am not at all anxious to begin again."

Suddenly Miss Tuke, who was looking over the stern, called out, "Mr. Walton, here is your shark."

And there, sure enough, was the ugly brute close under the surface of the water, this

time exhibiting the barb of his tail as well as nearly the whole of his top fin.

"A shark is one of the conventional interests of the deep," said I, as we all three stood looking, whilst the fellow at the wheel stepped aft by an arm's length from the spokes to look too. "No voyage is complete without a shark."

"We ought to kill him," said Sir Mordaunt, "but we don't want him on deck. Our ship's not big enough for that fellow to dance upon."

"And they makes a great mess, sir," said the man at the wheel. "Ye've got to chop 'em into little bits, to kill 'em; and they're full o' blood."

"Oh, we're bound to kill him," I exclaimed. "It's a duty we owe to our fellow-creatures. Is there such a thing as a shark hook on board?"

"There are two or three in the forecastle, sir," answered the man.

"Suppose we hook him, Sir Mordaunt,

and belay the line with his head out of water, and a bowline round him as a preventer guy? He'll then make a good target, and there are guns enough below."

"Let us wait until after breakfast," he answered. "The shark is evidently in no hurry to be off, and by that time my wife will be able to tell us whether the discharge of firearms will annoy her or not."

Soon after this we went to breakfast; but whilst we were waiting for Lady Brookes, Carey came to say that her mistress did not feel well enough to join us.

"Did I apologize to you, Mr. Walton, for having doubted that there was a shark under the stern?" said Miss Tuke presently, and when breakfast was fairly under weigh.

"Neither for that nor for darker suspicions," I answered.

Seeing her uncle looking, she told him how she had gone on deck and found me and Mrs. Stretton alone; and how the poor widow had her hands to her face and appeared

greatly agitated; and how I had said that my companion had been frightened by a shark" ("No, no; by one of the mastiffs," I interrupted); "but that," she went on without changing her face, "when we looked there was no shark to be seen."

Norie was laughing heartily in his sleeve. Apparently he took it that it was my turn now. It was certainly not hard to see that he relished this new posture in Miss Tuke.

"But the shark has reappeared, Sir Mor-daunt," said I, "to prove my story true."

"Do you mean to say, Walton," exclaimed Norie, with a sly roll of his eyes towards Miss Tuke, "that Mrs. Stretton—a sailor's wife, bear that in mind—was agitated even into burying her face in her hands by the sight of a shark?"

I answered by once more explaining that the poor woman had hung over the side in a brown study, thinking of her husband, no doubt, whose body floated in the deep, as they all knew, and not very many miles

away, and that the cold nose of the dog touching her hand had given her a great fright. "And that's just the story," said I, with an emphatic nod at the doctor. The foolish creature smiled and shook his head. He would not let me off, at least before Miss Tuke.

"It's hardly a subject for a joke," said Sir Mordaunt. "To me it is a wonderful thing that the poor woman bears up as she does. To be starved, and knocked about and drenched day and night by roaring seas for some days, is bad enough; but when you add the death of a husband to such an experience, it must be crushing."

"We have done our best to comfort and cheer her, uncle," said Miss Tuke.

"Yes, my dear, I know that. You have been very kind and good to her," he replied.

"It is a pity that she will not join our party here," said I, rather spitefully, and looking at Norie. "She is a very well-spoken woman, and it's a treat to hear her voice.

But even handsome women must not be denied the privilege of privacy, when they have a mind to enjoy it."

"She is too graphic," said Norie; "and we have a very cherished patient to remember."

"Yes, we must think of that, Walton," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "Norie showed great discretion in advising Mrs. Stretton to keep herself retired for awhile. Should grief master her in the course of a conversation, she might make my wife faint again, and the object of our cruise ought not to be defeated if we can help it."

Here I thought of the shark, and, seeing the shadow of old Purchase upon the skylight, I asked the baronet to hail him, and ascertain if the fish was still astern. This was done, and the answer (delivered in a voice that seemed to come out of the middle of a feather bed) came that the shark remained in sight.

Before we left the table, Sir Mordaunt

went to his wife, to tell her, I suppose, that we meant to shoot a shark, and that she was not to be frightened by the report of the firearms. Apparently she did not object, for the steward was told to follow us on deck with some of the guns out of the rack. We bundled up the companion-steps, and I immediately ran aft, and, looking over, saw the shark sure enough. A light draught of air had come up whilst we sat at breakfast, and the schooner was breathlessly creeping along over the transparent sheet of azure that looked like liquid blue glass. The shark, however, maintained a distance from us that he never shifted by the breadth of a hair, though I could not detect any movement in his body. He was fully twelve feet long, and with his huge shovel-nose, and hump-like fin, and tremorless iron-skinned and most powerfully-built body, looked as treacherous, malignant, and deadly a brute as any man would delight to slaughter.

"See how he follows us, Walton!" shouted

Sir Mordaunt. "How the dickens does he keep himself moving? Mind, Ada! For God's sake don't lean over the taffrail like that! Where's the fishing-gear? Let's kill him or put him to flight—get rid of him somehow. It's abominable to have him hanging dead in our wake, as though he smelt death in the air."

In a few minutes a big shark-hook was brought, the chain hitched to about a dozen fathoms of stout line, and the hook baited with a lump of salt beef.

"Stand by, some of you, with a running bowline when he's gorged the hook," said I, addressing two or three of the crew who had come aft to give us a hand; and so saying, I threw the great baited hook overboard.

Our taffrail was not very high above the water, and whenever the swell lifted the yacht's bows we were dipped into very unpleasantly close quarters with the shark, who ogled us all in turn, as though his palate could suspect no difference between such a

delicacy as a hairy seaman with a face like leather and the soft and delicate Miss Tuke. It gave one a strange sensation in the midriff to meet that evil cannibal eye, and to reflect with what horrible celerity and fiendish absence of all compunctious visitings the owner of it would accommodate the biggest man among us with a free passage in his enormous hold.

The moment, however, the bait splashed in the water, the brute dropped astern two or three fathoms, as if affronted by so poor a mouthful when we had it in our power to oblige him with dainties so very much more nourishing and filling. Yet to a hungry shark even a lump of salt meat is better than nothing ; though I could not help fancying that the beast divined our little game, or already had earned some experience of baited hooks, to judge from the manner in which he approached and smelt to the beef, and then recoiled from it, before making up his mind to bolt it.

I gave the hook another fathom of line, and this veering the bait nearer to the shark overcame his last lingering scruple. With a sweep of the tail, that filled the water with bubbles and eddies astern of him, he rushed at the bait, turned over, and his pale blue belly flashed under the glass-clear surface. The next instant he had bolted the beef and was making off with it. But I had already taken a turn with the line over a belaying-pin, and the rope instantly tautened upon the monster, and swept his huge shovel nose round after us.

"Tail on here, men!" I shouted. "Haul him along, and make ready with the bow-line."

The scene then became uncommonly fine—five of us sweating and hauling upon the line at one end, and the shark furiously resisting us at the other. This was by no means my first shark, but none that I can remember ever showed the activity of this

fellow. He gave us as much sport as a small whale would with a harpoon in its back. At one moment he would be on the surface, with his square nose hove out of the water, lashing up the foam as though a whirlwind were playing around him ; then he would dive with such tremendous force, that the whole five of us were swayed aft, as though a locomotive had got hold of the line.

We were all laughing and bawling and blowing and hauling, and raising a mighty hullabaloo over this business, when I saw one of the mastiffs spring on to the taffrail and look at the shark. His eyes were on fire, his black jaws were quivering with excitement.

"Mind the dog ; he'll be after the shark !" I shouted. But before the words were well out of my mouth, the noble animal, gathering himself together, launched into the air ; and scarcely had the plash of his body reached our ears, when the other mastiff,

rushing past us like a flash of light, cleared the taffrail at a bound, and there were both dogs in the water, making for the shark.

Sir Mordaunt greatly prized these dogs, which were indeed noble and valuable animals, and instantly sung out—

"Get the boat over! Never mind the shark! Save the dogs, men!"

"Put your helm down, man!" I shouted to the fellow at the wheel. "Stop the schooner's way! Don't you see we are going faster than those dogs can swim?"

Old Purchase, who had held aloof while we were playing the shark, now came sprawling over to the starboard quarter-boat, vociferating at the top of his voice, and greatly increasing the confusion. Meanwhile, and before the men had let go the line, I had thrown it over a belaying-pin, and was holding on to it, balancing myself, so to speak, against the weight of the shark, when, as I was eagerly looking at the dogs, who were now astern of the shark, that had

been towed past them by the motion of the yacht, the line gave to my weight, and I fell flat on my back, the line heaping itself on my face and breast by the force of the involuntary jerk I gave it.

"The shark's off! The hook has carried away!" I roared. "Look out now, or the fish will have the dogs!"

In hot haste I scrambled on to my feet and rushed to the taffrail. The schooner having come round to the wind, had brought the dogs abeam, and they were swimming around and around, about fifty yards distant from us, apparently in search of the shark, that had disappeared. Sir Mordaunt stood whistling to them with all his might, but whether because their blood was up, and they wanted to fight the strange beast they had seen us struggling with, or because they enjoyed their bath too much to be in a hurry to come out, they showed no disposition to obey their master's summons.

All this while the men were bothering

over the boat. Something was foul, and Purchase's noisy bawling and showing off did not help the fellows. There were enough seamen for that job, and I did not offer to help, but stood looking and looking, wondering where the shark was, and if he had made off for good, and if there were others about. Just as the boat splashed into the water I caught sight of a black fin sticking out of the varnished blue, about a pistol-shot from the dogs. One of them had seen it, and was making for it. I involuntarily tossed my hands up, shouting—

"See, Sir Mordaunt, there's the shark! If your men are not quick, he'll have that dog."

The baronet rushed to the side where the boat lay, and literally yelled to the men to make haste, stamping on the deck, and pointing, with a perfect frenzy of impotent anxiety.

But it was too late. In the eagerness of the noble animal to come at its foe, it was

swimming so vigorously that its head was high out of water, and now and again it uttered a short savage bark. But on a sudden the fin disappeared, and I could distinctly see the great fish sink by the length of a man's body below the surface. With a quick swing of the long tail the monster darted forward, its belly glistened as it came uppermost, and the dog, baffled by the sudden vanishing of the black fin, had turned its head towards us, when its body darted up out of the water as though it made a spring, the shovel nose of the shark overlapped the tawny hide, one terrific squeak came from the poor beast, with a most agonizing note ringing through it, and then fish and dog disappeared, leaving a great stain of blood-coloured foam upon the water.

Miss Tuke shrieked out, and Sir Mordaunt stood as white as death. By this time the boat had got away, and a few strokes of the oars brought it abreast of the other dog,

which was immediately collared and dragged over the side ; and when presently the animal was handed up on deck, it was trembling as never did I see a dog tremble before. It did not offer to shake its wet coat, but crouched all streaming under the after-grating.

This incident depressed us greatly. We stood looking in silence at the crimson patch upon the water, that stayed in one compact stain like oil, whilst the men hoisted the boat, and the vessel's head was put round to her course.

"We'll say nothing about this to my wife," said Sir Mordaunt, addressing us all generally.

"Certainly not," answered Norie.

"If she asks where the dog is, of course we must tell her that it fell overboard," continued Sir Mordaunt. "But not a word about the shark."

"Not a word," said I. "Do you see anything of the brute, Miss Tuke? I

would give something to avenge the poor animal."

We all peered, but sharkee had found as huge a meal as he could manage in the big dog, and had made sail. I hauled in the end of the line, and found that one of the links of the chain had parted, yet it had looked a very strong chain, and stout enough to have swung three such fish aboard all at once.

"Anyhow, he has got the hook in his inside, Sir Mordaunt," said I. "And I am much mistaken if that's not a pill that will presently stop any more cabbaging on his part."

This, however, was no consolation to the baronet, who was greatly distressed and vexed by the loss of the dog. He called to the steward to carry the guns below, and getting under the awning, lighted a cigar and smoked with a very moody face.

"Adventures are crowding rather more thickly than we want, Miss Tuke, don't

you think?" I asked. "We shall not be able to say that our cruise lacked incident."

"I wish I hadn't seen the dog killed!" she exclaimed, with the horror of the thing in the expression of her eyes. "I shall never forget it, nor the poor creature's scream."

"Do you want any more adventures?"

"Not I. Another such a one would set me crying to be home."

"After such a tragedy as that water-logged barque was the theatre of," said I, "the death of the dog makes but a poor business. If you are going to find a long memory in what has just occurred, what sort of memory, think you, will yonder men"—and I pointed to the three seamen who were in the bows of the schooner—"and the poor woman below preserve?"

"Don't put my imagination on the rack, Mr. Walton," she answered. "You will make me hate the sea as much as I thought I loved it."

"Oh, pray don't do that thing, because if you make yourself hate the sea, you know you may follow it up by hating sailors."

"There is no fear of that," she answered archly, and smiling in my face.

This admission was made exceedingly agreeable to me by the manner in which it was said. Looking round, and seeing Norie on the skylight sucking at a cigar and watching us, I could not forbear smiling; but she was as grave again as a nun at her prayers, gazing at the sea, and evidently in no mood for a light chat. So I placed a chair for her near her uncle, and fetched her some books; and then fixing an easy chair in a spot where the light air that was keeping the mainsail quiet breezed down softly under the awning, I lighted a pipe, stretched my legs, and gave myself up to a spell of indolence and honeydew tobacco. My position enabled me to command the deck, and Miss Tuke in particular

I had very plainly in my sight. I thought she looked prettier this morning than I had seen her before; but then, to be sure, it was always my impression every time I saw her. No girl's face that I can remember meeting so regularly improved on acquaintance as Miss Tuke's. Then, again, all her postures and movements were bewitchingly ladylike. I glanced from her to her uncle, and indulged in a short spell of thinking about him.

It was not perhaps very easy to feel sorry for my warm-hearted, hospitable friend, when I looked round upon his beautiful vessel, and thought of the wealth that enabled him to possess and maintain such a luxury, and when I likewise remembered that his health was equal to the enjoyment of all the pleasures his fortune could command. And yet I could not think of his wife, and believe that he was a happy man. He certainly did not look so now. I had never seen him more dejected, which made me think he was

mixing up some foolish fears and fancies with the destruction of his dog.

On the other side of the skylight sat Norie, lazily surveying Miss Tuke, whose back was upon him, and occasionally glancing at me with his black, monk-like eyes, which looked as dusky as an Indian's in the shadow of his wide straw hat. From him my eye went to old Purchase, who had been stumping this side of the deck until I located myself upon it, when he immediately changed sides, to get away from me. The old fool hated me, and was jealous of me, and I don't say I hadn't given him cause. Sweltering as was the day, he was dressed in thick pilot cloth, and it was difficult to look at his sour and wrinkled face, and the dim eyes he cast sometimes upon the sea and sometimes upon the sails, without laughing.

The men had spread a short awning over the forecastle, and were seated under it, busy on various small jobs ; but where the decks were unshadowed, the air was quivering

with the heat that struck up from the planks, between which the pitch was bubbling ; and the foremast and standing rigging trembled and waved in the haze, and seemed to be winding round and round like revolving screws. There was enough wind to keep the sea flashing, and most beautiful was the effect of the diamond-like scintillation upon the soft deep blue of the water. The sky was cloudless, but the rich azure of the zenith lightened as it drew towards the horizon, until it was nearly as pale as silver where it met the deep ; and in the fiery-hot air the ocean boundary waved as though a mountainous swell were rolling around.

Suddenly the fellow who was steering called to Purchase. I turned, and saw him pointing over the starboard bow of the schooner, and getting up to look, I immediately perceived the smoke of a steamer, but very faint and like the bluish thread of a spider, leaning into the southern sky.

I went over to Sir Mordaunt, and startled him out of a deep reverie by exclaiming that yonder was a steamer apparently coming our way. He jumped up, and was full of life in a moment.

"If that be so, Walton," said he, "we may be able to send the rescued men home."

This was my thought too. I fetched the glass and looked at the smoke, that presented a curious effect, owing to the refraction on the horizon which threw the point, whence the smoke issued, above the water. There was nothing as yet to be seen of the vessel, but by the inclination of the smoke and its steadiness, I could not doubt that the steamer was heading our way. I continued watching her for about ten minutes, at the expiration of which time I could make out, with the help of the telescope, that was a very powerful one, the projection of a mast and square yards above the horizon ; and soon after the whole hull drew up, though to the naked eye she was a mere

speck upon the very verge of the mighty surface of blue sea, upon which the sunshine gleamed and faded with the sinking and rising of the light swell, like the fluctuating lustre in a moving sheet of shot silk.

It was now seen that she was heading dead for us, and Sir Mordaunt sent his niece below, to tell Lady Brookes that a steamer was coming our way.

"How shall we convey our wishes to her?" said he to me.

"Purchase should know," said I.

"Purchase!" he called. "I want that steamer stopped, that we may ask her captain's permission to send the three men to her—that is, if she is going home. How shall we stop her?"

"How shall we stop her, sir?" wheezed the old fellow, giving me a piratical glance, as if he guessed there was some trick of mine in that question. "Why, it's a case of distress; so half-mast the ensign, jack down."

It was plain from this that the man knew nothing about ship's signals, for he should have flown colours signifying "I wish to communicate." But as a coalman, he would probably have handled no other bunting in his life than his old ensign.

I ventured to suggest that the half-masted ensign with the jack down was a very extreme signal to display, and would make them believe our vessel in imminent danger.

"If you know better than me, Mr. Walton, perhaps you'll tell Sir Mordaunt what *your* idea of signalling is," exclaimed the old man, stormily.

"Pray please yourself," I replied, preserving my gravity with an effort.

He began to address Sir Mordaunt, who cut him short by saying, "Hoist what you choose, Purchase; hoist what you choose, man; only see that you stop the steamer."

"I takes my orders from *you*, sir," replied Purchase, with angry emphasis, and forthwith bundled aft, and with great ostentation

of gesture bent on the ensign and hoisted it, union down and half-mast high, making us appear in a terrible plight indeed. I nearly suffocated with laughter whilst watching his face as he gazed up at the masthead and shook a turn out of the flag-halliards. If Sir Mordaunt had been capable of anger, I believe he would have been sharp upon me then ; but his gentle disposition would never let him go beyond a remonstrance.

"My dear Walton, pray don't quiz the old man," said he. "He may have forgotten the art of signalling by flags."

"But couldn't he look into the signal-book, to see what he should do?" I replied. "Suppose *me* ignorant, my ignorance goes for nothing. But *his* ignorance is ominous, even in so small a matter as bunting."

"Don't be afraid of him," said he, smiling. "I'll warrant you that he carries us home safe enough."

"Let us say nothing about that, Sir Mordaunt, for here's your wife."

He hastened to meet her and get her a chair, and in a trice was busy about her, pointing out the ship, adjusting a cushion to her back, and so on.

Miss Tuke came to me, and said in a whisper, "Do you remember when the shark seized the poor dog, that I screamed? Well, my aunt heard that scream, and asked what it meant. I told her that one of the dogs jumped overboard for a swim, and that it had frightened me. I wish her health did not make these fibs necessary. But having told her this, I repeat it to you, that the fiction may be maintained."

"I am afraid among you all that you are spoiling your aunt," said I.

"It's Uncle Mordaunt's wish," says she, quickly.

"Well, then, *he's* spoiling her. If I had a nervous wife, I'd humour her nerves, I believe; but my humouring should be an education, too. A poor shipwrecked widow, like the woman below, should not scare her,

and she should be able to see a shark eat a dog with just as much sensibility as you showed, and no more."

"That puzzles me, rather ; but it doesn't matter," said she. "At all events, I am sure you mean to compliment me. But you will remember that I am not an invalid, and I see that you still think of the poor widow."

I laughed outright, whereupon up marches Norie.

"What's all the fun about, Walton ?"

"Don't be suspicious ; we weren't talking about you," said I.

"Aren't you haunted by that poor brute of a dog ?" cried he. "You were the cause of his death. You *would* fish for that shark, and by hooking him you excited the poor animal, and made him jump overboard."

"Hush, pray !" exclaimed Miss Tuke, with a glance at her aunt.

He made a hideous grimace. "Heaven preserve me ! I had clean forgot. Why, what

a monstrous ship is that yonder ! What is she ? A man-of-war ? ”

She was approaching us very fast. Her hull was green and red, with a profusion of gilt, that looked like gold lace, upon her bow. She was brig-rigged, with raking masts, and a square yellow funnel leaning aft, and apparently not far short of three thousand tons burden. She looked to be aiming straight for us, and the heavy sheer of her iron bows made her resemble a small island coming along. Two sparkling columns of water spouted up at an angle from each side of her stem, and their summits rose to close under the hawsepipes ; but as they arched over, they broke into foam, and girdled the dark red bottom of the speeding hull with a band of snow, the ends of which met under her counter, and streamed away in a glittering milk-white line across the blue sea, until the eye lost sight of the delicate trail in the far distance.

When she was about a mile off, her people

hoisted English colours, and slowed the engines, as you could have seen by the drooping of the two shining bow waves, like the gradual turning down of a fountain. I have no doubt the sight of our flag made them reckon upon coming across something tragical; and through the glass I could make out swarms of heads along the line of bulwarks, watching us.

"Stand by to hail her, Purchase," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt; and we all gathered together in a cluster abaft the main rigging to see her, whilst our men bustled about, letting go and tricing up, and dowsing canvas, that we might not swim out of earshot.

Now that we knew by her flag she was English, and took it, of course, that she was going home, we looked at her with an interest which, if you have crossed the ocean and been for days without speaking a vessel, you will sympathize with. She made the picture of home rise before us vividly—the English Channel, with its beautiful shores;

the yachts whitening the offing round the Isle of Wight; the crowded Downs, with low-lying Deal sparkling beyond the glittering shingle; the noble, busy Thames, and the garden-like lands beyond its banks. A group of men were upon her high skeleton bridge, and one stood at the extreme end of it, waiting to hail us when near enough. Presently the turn of her wheel by a couple of spokes canted her head, and she drew out slowly (her engines being stopped), and we watched with admiration as she floated abreast of us the gradual unfolding of her immense length, and the beauty of the whole picture of her red bottom colouring the blue water under her, and her green side full of flashing points of glass, and her massive stem standing up and overlooking the sea like a sheer cliff, whilst a trickle of grey smoke floated languidly towards the sky out of her short leaning funnel, and her rigging veined the heavens like a spider's web. Her poop was of middling length, protected by a very

low bulwark surmounted by brass stanchions and white lifelines, so that we could clearly perceive the crowd of saloon passengers seated or standing, and watching us from under the awning. There were a great many women dressed in all manner of gay colours, and Miss Tuke hit the character of the picture neatly when she said to me that those people looked like a garden party out on a cruise. Binocular glasses and telescopes bristled at us from all parts of the vessel. I could well imagine the wonderment excited by the inverted and half-masted ensign aboard a yacht with a crowd of smartly-dressed seamen in her bows, well-dressed people aft, and the whole apparently coming up to a high standard of safety, luxury, and equipment.

"Schooner ahoy!" came ringing from the steamer.

"Hillo!" bawled Purchase.

"Why have you that distress signal flying?"

"We've three shipwrecked men aboard, that we took off a water-logged barque," vociferated Purchase; "and if you're bound for Hengland, will 'ee let us send 'em aboard you?"

There was a curious movement among the people on the poop at this, and the man who had hailed us stumped along the bridge to where the knot of men were. I could not help thinking that the information they had got was a disappointment to many of them. A good deal of excitement had been promised by our flag, and Purchase's statement was no better than an anti-climax. Presently the man returned to the end of the bridge and sung out, "We'll send a boat;" and after a short delay a boat swept round under the stern of the huge vessel, in charge of one of the mates, an individual in a long coat with gilt buttons, and a square peaked cap. A short ladder was thrown over the side, the boat hooked on, and the mate stepped aboard. He raised his cap

very politely, and glanced round him with much curiosity, and then took a squint at the ensign, as if he could not reconcile that flag with the small business that had caused its display.

"I am glad that nothing is the matter with you," said he, addressing Sir Mordaunt, at once guessing him to be the owner. "We hardly knew what to expect when we saw that signal."

"You are bound to England, I presume," said Sir Mordaunt.

"We are, sir — to Glasgow, from New Orleans."

"That's a bit out of the men's track," said I to the baronet.

"Why, no," he replied ; "not if I give them the means to get to Liverpool. Would your captain take the poor fellows?" said he, addressing the mate.

"Certainly," was the reply. "I shall have to trouble you for the particulars of the rescue. Which are the men?"

They were called, and came aft. Dressed in the clothes lent them by the yacht's crew, and having fairly recovered their health, they looked very tidy, likely seamen.

"This gentleman," said Sir Mordaunt to them, "tells me that the captain of yonder steamship is willing to give you a passage to Glasgow. I know that the port you want to get to is Liverpool, but as you are anxious to get home here is a chance you should not miss; and if I give this gentleman sufficient funds to pay for your journey from Glasgow to Liverpool, your being landed at Glasgow won't make any difference to you."

"We can only say, Thank you, and God bless you, sir!" answered one of them.

"You still have the clothes you wore when you were rescued?" continued Sir Mordaunt.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you will keep those you have on, and the two suits will serve you as a kit. I'll make it right with the owners of those clothes."

The poor fellows tried to thank him again, but the words stuck in their throats.

"Bear a hand now, and get your bundles into the boat," said the mate; and they skurried forward, whilst the mate went into the cabin with Sir Mordaunt, to take wine, and look at the entry in the log-book relating to the wreck.

In a very short time the three men were ready, and I saw them, as they said good-bye to the *Lady Maud's* men, fling down their bundles and grasp the yachtsmen's hands. Indeed, I never saw gratitude more movingly expressed than in the postures and motions of these poor sailors. They came to the gangway where I was standing, and one of them said, "We should like to say good-bye to Mrs. Stretton, sir."

"To be sure," I answered; and went to the skylight, where I called to the steward to ask Mrs. Stretton to step on deck. She came immediately after Sir Mordaunt and the mate had arrived, and the three men,

pulling off their caps, went up to her and held out their hands one after another. I did not hear them speak ; I believe nothing was said ; it was merely a rough, pathetic seaman's grasp of the hand on their part. The memory of their long anguish, their drowned shipmates, all those hours of famine and thirst, with Death the skeleton sitting among them on that water-swept deck, would well account for their parting in silence. I had my eye on the widow's face as she shook hands with the first man. It was firm, and she looked at him steadily ; but she broke down suddenly when she took the second man's hand, and dropped her face, unable to look at him ; and when the third man took her hand she was crying piteously. Miss Tuke put her arm through hers and led her away to the after end of the deck ; and I was glad to see her go, for it was painful that such grief as hers should be watched by so many eyes, though God knows there was no want of sympathy for her.

The men then bade us farewell. Sir Mor-daunt gave them his hand, and one of them held it as though he could not make up his mind to release it. "Good-bye, mum! God bless you, mum!" said they to Lady Brookes.

"Now, my lads, jump into the boat," exclaimed the mate. "But first let me tell you that this gentleman," indicating the baronet, "has given me ten pounds for my captain to hold for you;" and then, as if he feared this would excite another demonstration of gratitude and cause more delay, he sung out, "In with you, boys! Chuck your bundles down."

The men dropped over the side, the mate, bowing to us all, followed, and as the boat shoved off the three men stood up and cheered us. In a very little while they disappeared under the stern of the great steamship, and shortly after the monster began to forge ahead.

It was a brave sight to see that huge and powerful fabric—that had lain motionless

upon the swell which kept the yacht's masts swaying like a bandmaster's *baton*—divide the water under the hidden propulsion of her screw. The trembling light under her quivered in her glossy sides, and the glass of her scuttles flashed and faded as her head came round to the north-and-east. A great body of black smoke burst suddenly out of her low fat funnel, and the first belch of it shot up like a balloon ; but the breeze was too light to incline the dark and gleaming pillar until it had reached a certain height, when it yielded to the pressure of the current up there, and leaned over into a most graceful curl, which, as it blew further and further towards the horizon, looked like a gigantic bridge arching the blue water, whose surface mirrored the league of sooty coil in a straight dark brown line, that might very well have passed in the distance for a shoal of mud.

But though she made a fine show, yet she was sadly wanting in all those points of

beauty which a sailing vessel offers. The pyramid of shining canvas, the stately leaning of the tapering masts, the swelling curves of the jibs, the lovely graduation of shadow and light upon the rounded cloths, and the sharp clear lining of the delicate rigging upon the sails, were all lacking. Strength, even in its most majestic form, was expressed by that mighty red and green hull heaping the sparkling blue water at her side, and a torrent of snow pouring away from under her elliptical stern, that was radiant with gilt configurations; but there was no gracefulness. The eye had to seek the *Lady Maud* for that. And a beautiful sight she was, I make no doubt, for the passengers aboard that great receding steamer to watch. For so soon as the boat had gone clear of us, sail had been made, and such air as there was being abeam, every stitch of square canvas, and the studding-sails to boot, were piled upon the little vessel, until she must have looked like a big white cloud upon the

sea. Soon the tinkling and churning of water alongside told us that the *Lady Maud* was contributing something to the rapidly increasing interval that now separated the two vessels. In three-quarters of an hour the great ocean steamship was no bigger than a nutshell upon the horizon, and when we went to lunch nothing was to be seen of her but a smudge of smoke hovering over the spot where she had vanished.

CHAPTER III.

UNTIL the morning of the —— of July, that day making it over five weeks since we had sailed from Southampton, nothing happened that is worth recording. But on that morning the *Lady Maud*, being then under a mainsail, foresail, and two jibs, the wind to the Northward of East, and fresh, a squall blew up, and half an hour after a heavy gale of wind had stripped us of every fragment of canvas, saving the close-reefed foresail; but the wind increasing in fury, this had to be furled, and we lay breasting the monstrous seas under bare poles, our topmasts housed, and the yards on deck.

Taking it altogether, the gale was as fierce a one of its kind as ever I can remember;

never indeed approaching the force of a cyclone, though at midnight it came very near to being a hurricane. For hours and hours the ocean was like wool and the sky like ink. The heavy seas which rolled up carried the yacht bodily away to the westwards, and I reckoned that the average drift of the vessel was not less than one and three-quarter nautical miles an hour for hard upon seventy-two hours of storm.

The gale blew for three days, and they were the worst three days that ever I had passed. The *Lady Maud*, though a powerful boat, and large for her class, was but a small craft to fight such a sea as then ran; nor did she make the weather we might have hoped from her beam and sheer. There were times when her plunges left nothing of her visible but her after-deck down to a few feet before the mainmast; she looked to be smothered in a boiling cauldron; and one of those seas tore up the whole length of starboard hencoops, and shot

the fragments overboard like a flight of arrows, and robbed us of two dozens of fine poultry.

Our condition below was truly pitiable. It was the worst part of the storm. The gale was like a sirocco for the temperature of it, and the cabin, with the skylight closed and the companion shut to prevent the water from washing down, was hot enough to bake a joint in. But add to this intolerable atmosphere the frightful pitching, the sensation of being shot into the air with terrific force and velocity, and then falling with such headlong, sickeningly swift descent, as to make you hold your breath, with the belief that the hull would split open as it crashed into the deafening hollow ; whilst the whole fabric rang with the howling and roaring of the tormented seas outside, and the raging of the furious blast along the dark sky ; and every now and again there would be a deadly pause in the yacht's motion after one of her wild plunges, as if the sea she had

shipped over her bows, and that had washed aft in a tempest of foam, had proved too much for her, and she was going down. Add this, I say !

No skill, no experience was of any avail at a time like this. The yacht lay to under bare poles, and the helm lashed, and whoever happened to be on deck to watch her stood right aft, for the seas which swept the forecastle made that part of the vessel as perilous as a raft, and no man could have stayed there without being lashed ; nay, even then he would have stood the chance of being drowned by the perpetual flying of water over him.

But our miserable condition below was lamentably aggravated by Lady Brookes' agony of apprehension. I believe, had the gale lasted another day, she would have died outright of fright. No food that I heard of passed her lips. She lay upon her swinging bed, moaning and screaming, until the power of making those noises failed her. At one

period, indeed, her mind grew deranged, for I afterwards learnt that she had charged her husband with bringing her on this voyage merely to kill her, and stormed and raved at him, until he ran in a state of distraction from her cabin.

His distress was truly deplorable. Between the horror of the gale on the one hand, and the alarming state of his wife on the other, he lost all nerve. I remember on one of those evenings being alone in the cabin, listening to the terrifying and thrilling bursting of the seas against the groaning, struggling, staggering hull, and very gravely doubting whether any of us would ever see the sun rise again, when Sir Mordaunt came through the door that led to the sleeping berths, and passing his arm round an iron stanchion, stood looking at me without speaking a word, and his face as white as death. There was an expression of horror in his eyes which made them singularly brilliant and affecting to see, and I then

took notice that he appeared to have aged by at least ten years since the morning.

"Come, come," I exclaimed, encouragingly, "let us keep up our hearts, if only for the sake of the women. You know Jack's old saying—'While she creaks she holds.'"

"That may be," he replied, in a wild manner; "but oh, Walton, it's killing my wife! it's killing her! it's killing her!" he repeated.

As I had not seen her, she having kept her cabin from the first hour of the gale, I could not offer an opinion; but had she been anybody else but his wife, I believe I should have told him that a woman who could make such a hullabaloo as she had raised was not a person to die off in a hurry.

"Oh, Walton," he continued, "it's a dreadful blow to have my cherished hopes defeated in this way. I brought her against her will, and yet God knows I acted as I thought for the best. Even should this miserable gale leave us alive, it will have

upset all the good she has derived from the cruise."

"I should strongly recommend you," said I, "to abandon all thoughts of returning home in the *Lady Maud*. Your wisest course will be to land your wife at Kingston, and accompany her to England in one of the mail steamers. It is quite clear that Lady Brookes' nerves will not suffer her to receive any benefit from the sea."

"And can you be surprised?" he cried. "Feel this now!" and as he spoke, the yacht seemed to jump clean out of the water, reeling in her somersault until the edge of the swinging-trays touched the upper deck, and I, from the port side of the cabin, looked down at Sir Mordaunt as though my head was out of window and I was surveying a man on the pavement below. And then came one of those falls which always filled me with dread. The crash of the hull striking the water was as heart-shaking as the explosion of a great piece of ordnance,

and the thunder of the near surges roared like the echo of the report. The deadly pause followed ; you could have heard the foam upon the deck seething and hissing to the very doors of the companion, and presently, when the brave little vessel lifted again, my face was wet with sweat. Ay, call me what name you please, my fine fellow ; but had you sat in that stifling cabin, and felt that prodigious heave and fall, and waited through that frightful pause to see if she would lift again, you must have a stronger head and heart than I, not to have perspired at every pore as I did.

It was impossible to go on talking. Even the few sentences we had exchanged had to be shouted, so wild and mixed were the sounds in the cabin. Norie lay sick and stupefied in his bunk ; he had been there since the preceding day. Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton were with Lady Brookes. The widow, I had heard from Sir Mordaunt, had been unremitting in her attentions to her

ladyship, and Miss Tuke had borne herself with great courage. Indeed, those two women were the real heroes of that gale ; we men made but poor figures by comparison.

But to cut this part of my log short : the gale left us at noon on a day that made the third day of furious storm. The wind fined down with astonishing rapidity. It seemed, indeed, to drop completely and at once. I went on deck to look about me, and stood transfixed and absolutely awed by the appearance of the swell. The height and power of the liquid mountains pass all power of description in words. The monstrous acclivities took their colour from the sky, and wore the appearance of molten lead. They poured their gigantic folds along without a break of foam to relieve the livid, heaving, unnatural aspect ; and such was the rolling of the yacht, that with every dip of her gun-wales she seemed to lay her masts along the water, and it was as much as a man's life was worth for him to let go his hold.

Figure such a sea, without a breath of air to ruffle the gigantic oil-smooth coils ! The small rise in the glass did not encourage me to believe that we were going to have it all our own way yet. Clinging to the companion, I gazed around me, to see what damage the gale had done us. Forward I could trace no mischief beyond the loss of the hencoops ; but, on looking at the davits, I saw that the fine quarter-boat with which we had rescued the survivors of the barque's crew had been smashed to pieces—she was no more than a mere skeleton, the stem and stern-posts hanging by the tackles. But the long boat amidships on chocks was safe, though it was strange that she should have escaped the seas which had washed over the bows.

The first to come on deck was Sir Mor-daunt. He stood looking around him with the utmost astonishment.

"I can hardly credit my senses !" he exclaimed. "Why, just now it was blowing

fit to tear the masts out! Is this only a lull, Walton? It may burst upon us from another quarter in a minute."

"I hope not," said I, "and I hardly think so. Once in my experience—it was in my first voyage—a gale left us as this has done, blew itself clean out, and fell dead. But I remember that it left a better sky than that," I continued, casting my eye on the sooty stooping pall, and noticing the gradual thickening up of the horizon all round.

"How frightfully the yacht rolls!" he cried. "I hope we may not swing our masts overboard. To be reduced to a sheer hulk would about complete the misery of the last three days."

"No fear of that," I answered, "with those topmasts housed and those preventer backstays set up. Is that your doing, Mr. Tripshore?" I called, pointing to those additional supports to the masts, and addressing the mate, who stood holding on to .

one of the belaying pins which girdled the foot of the mainmast.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "and they're all wanted. If there was any chance of this here tumbling lasting, I don't know but what I'd recommend Mr. Purchase to swifter in the rigging. But now the wind's gone the swell will go too."

"Are we booked for any more bad weather, think you?" asked Sir Mordaunt.

"Well, it's hard to say, sir," said the mate, throwing a look round. "It's drawing on thick, but if any wind comes, it won't come hard whilst that fog hangs."

"Where's Purchase?"

"Below, sir, working out his dead reckoning."

"We ought to know what he makes it," said I. "We've been blown by a long slant to the westwards, and if the last observation he took—four days since, mind—was correct, his course should be to the eastward until he can get sights."

"I'll speak to him," said the baronet. "Tripshore, tell Purchase to come to me the moment he has worked out his reckoning, and request him to bring his chart."

The mate went below.

"Sir Mordaunt," said I, "will you tell me how Lady Brookes does? Is she better to-day?"

"She is not worse, Walton; but you will find her thin, and sadly changed. I have made up my mind to do as you suggested. I'll go home with her in one of the mail steamers, and Purchase can sail the yacht to England. We will settle the matter later on. Only let this dreadful swell go down. I can hardly collect my thoughts."

He said this at an instant when an unusually heavy mountain of water heeled the yacht over until she lay almost on her beam ends; the spray shot in a fury of smoke through the submerged scupper-holes, and the toppling sea rose above the level of the bulwark rail. Had we let go at that moment

we should have whisked overboard as neatly as a man holding on to the gutter of a roof would drop into the road by relaxing his grasp. The wildness of the tumble appeared to daze the baronet, whose ashen-grey face showed such ravages from the worry, anxiety, and alarm that had possessed him during the storm, as I never should have believed the human countenance capable of receiving the imprint of in so short a period.

As I stood looking at him, Mrs. Stretton came up the companion. I helped her up, and gave her a rope's end to hold by. She was very pale, and seemed worn out; her eyes had lost their brilliancy, and she reminded me of the appearance she had presented on the day of her rescue.

"You are wise to come on deck," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "I am afraid you have suffered much from your confinement below and your devoted attention to my wife. Believe me deeply sensible of the sympathy and kindness you have shown her."

"I owe you my life," she replied simply. "I shall never be able to repay you—nor you, Mr. Walton." And then looking at the sea, she cried, "The wind is gone, and yet in the cabin it feels sometimes as if the yacht were rolling over."

"We have seen the worst of it," said I; "though I should prefer the sunshine to that mist which is gathering around us. Is Miss Tuke coming up?"

"No, as Lady Brookes is asleep, Miss Tuke has gone to lie down," she answered. "What a brave lady she is! In the worst of the gale she never showed the least fear. Oh, I should tell you, Sir Mordaunt, that before Lady Brookes fell asleep we got her to eat a plate of cold chicken and drink some brandy and water."

"I am glad to hear that; the food will put some strength into her," exclaimed the poor gentleman, with a little show of cheerfulness in his manner, that to me somehow made his aspect and tones exceedingly pathetic.

"Her ladyship is no longer afraid of you, then," said I softly in the widow's ear.

"No ; but Mr. Norie was very wise to keep me banished whilst there was a chance of my frightening her," she replied, whispering. "You cannot imagine what a dreadful condition her nerves are in. Her behaviour during the gale was like that of a mad woman. What would have been my sufferings had I been as timid as she when I was with the poor men on the wreck?" She shuddered, and sighed convulsively, and added, "I am so weary of the sea ! it is so cold, so cruel, so merciless ! Would to God it had spared my poor love to me ! The loss of all that we owned in the world would have been a little matter then."

Here Tripshore came on deck.

"Will Purchase be long?" called out Sir Mordaunt.

"I don't think so, sir," answered the mate, giving me a queer look, the meaning of which I could not guess.

All this while we lay floundering and wallowing under our lower-masts, with not a fragment of canvas showing. Sail was of no use to us until some wind came. An hour's idle beating and flogging upon those shooting, staggering, and swinging spars, would have done our canvas more harm than three months of fair wear. The schooner lay broadside to the swell, that now and again depressed her so sharply that the green water poured over the bulwark-rail on to the deck, and went washing as high as a man's knee over to the other side with the send of the vessel; and the jerking and straining of the masts was so violent, that it would not have greatly surprised me had the chain plates drawn, and the lofty sticks gone away overboard.

About twenty minutes after Sir Mordaunt had sent for him, Purchase emerged, and came clawing and lurching along to where we stood. He had a chart under his arm and a sheet of paper in one hand. His face

was unusually red, his cap was drawn low down over his forehead, and fake upon fake of blue spotted neckcloth coiled round his neck gave him such a strangled look as was disagreeable to see.

"Purchase," said Sir Mordaunt, "I am anxious to know what you make our position. We must have been driven a good many leagues to the westward, and the weather looks very ugly—very ugly yet, Purchase. No sign of the sun, and no promise of a star to-night;" and he stared upwards and then around him with a dismal shake of the head.

The old man made no answer to this, but leaning against the skylight so as to balance himself, he opened the chart.

"Here, Mr. Tripshore," he exclaimed, in somewhat thick accents, "come and put your hand upon this chart where it curls up."

This was done, and Sir Mordaunt drew near the skipper, holding tightly by the sky-

light. I stood on the other side, but the chart was intelligible to me though inverted. Likewise I had a good view of Purchase, who, the moment I looked at him close, I could see had been drinking. Sir Mordaunt found this out also at once, no doubt by the smell of the man's breath (for he stood next him). He drew up suddenly and stared at him, and then glanced at me, but said nothing.

"Here's the place where I makes the yacht to be," said Purchase, pressing his square thumb upon the chart. "Ye can read the latitood and longitood," he added, speaking in a greasy, ventral, low comedian sort of voice, and surveying me with his small wandering eyes.

"What do you make it?" demanded Sir Mordaunt, with a sternness I had never seen in him before, nor should have believed possible in him.

The old fellow raised the sheet of paper to his face, and after bothering over the

figures, answered, "Latitood, twenty-five degrees ten minutes; longitood, seventy-three degrees five minutes."

"What drift have you allowed for the three days?" I inquired.

He made no reply.

"Don't you hear Mr. Walton's question?" cried Sir Mordaunt.

"I've got northen to do with Mr. Walton, sir," he answered. "You're my master."

The baronet repeated my question.

"About thirty mile," he answered, keeping his thumb stuck upon the chart in the queerest posture, as though he wanted to spin his hand.

"You may add another sixty miles to that, Sir Mordaunt, and then be within the mark," said I.

The old skipper looked at me with wandering eyes and a most evil expression in his face. I waited for him to insult me, when I should have told him he was drunk, and talked to him, as I should have known

how from my old sea training ; but he held his peace, perhaps because he saw my intention.

"Here I see is the Crooked Island Passage," said Sir Mordaunt, after pausing to give Purchase time to answer my objection.

"Bearing South by West half West," said Purchase. "'Taint my idee to try for that passage, sir. I shall haul away to the east-wards under heasy canvas till the weather clears."

"That's just what you suggested, Walton," said Sir Mordaunt, with a gleam of satisfaction on his face.

Purchase looked at me and was about to speak, but the yacht dipping heavily, he gave with it, lost his balance, and went rolling like a barrel down against the bulwarks. This was an accident that might easily have befallen him even had he been perfectly sober ; but as we all perceived he was partially intoxicated, his tumble was like an emphasis upon his condition, and

Sir Mordaunt looked away with an air of great disgust and irritation from the square scrambling figure as the old noodle got up and lurched towards the skylight, with a purple face shining with perspiration.

Mrs. Stretton whispered, "He is intoxicated, Mr. Walton. He is not in a fit state to talk to Sir Mordaunt, and explain his navigation."

"This is not the first time," I replied, in a low voice. "But Sir Mordaunt will see him with my eyes now, I hope. He is less qualified in my opinion to command this vessel than the cook."

"That will do," said the baronet to Purchase. "You can take the chart below again."

"That's what I makes it, sir," replied the man, again reading the sheet of paper, and trying to steady his voice and comport himself as though he would have us see his fall was no evidence of unsteady legs. "Latitude, twenty-five ten; longitude, seventy-

three five." And so saying, he rolled up the chart very slowly, and deliberately took a prolonged view of the sea, and, watching his chance, sheered over to the starboard bulwarks, and clawed himself abreast of the hatchway, down which he disappeared.

Sir Mordaunt stood near me in moody silence, until Mrs. Sretton, who grew fatigued by her posture, asked me to hand her to the companion. I assisted her to descend the steps, and then returned.

"I am afraid you are right in your views of Purchase," said Sir Mordaunt. "He is again in liquor, and I fear the abominable habit is confirmed. Three times we have detected him, and who knows how often he may have been intoxicated in the night time, when we were asleep? I am greatly deceived and disappointed. I could not have believed he would misbehave again after the conversation I had with him. But I shall say nothing to him. Let him carry the yacht to Kingston, which I have no doubt

he'll be able to manage, and I will hand the vessel over to some agents, to send to England. We have all had enough of this cruise. For myself, I can honestly say the last week has cured me of my taste for ocean sailing. Henceforth—if I am spared for any more yachting—I shall never go a mile beyond English waters."

"Well, as you say, the man has navigated us so far, and he may be able to accomplish the rest; and perhaps you are wise in resolving to say nothing to him," said I. "But he is out in his dead reckoning—of that I am positive; though, as he means to stand to the eastward, his miscalculations ought not to greatly matter."

"When should we make Jamaica, think you?"

"In about ten days or so, with anything of a breeze," I answered. "I am assuming, of course, that Purchase's latitude is correct. His longitude I am sure is wrong."

"After his conduct to-day I shall stand

no more on ceremony," said he. "I'll not consult the fellow's feelings. If you will take an observation—of course, if a chance occurs," casting a forlorn look at the sky—"you'll greatly oblige me."

"I can take a star in his watch below. He needn't know that I am topping him."

"Why didn't you suggest that before?" asked he, reproachfully.

"Pray remember how sensitive you have been about the man. You staved off all criticism."

"Because I had confidence. And mind, Walton, I am only shaken now because he has broken his promise, and I find him drunk again. But you will do as you suggest? It will ease both our minds to know that his reckoning tallies with ours. And though he should have under-estimated our drift to the west, that will not make his observations incorrect."

"Certainly not," said I. "But look there—and there! We shall get no stars to-night.

The horizon's not a mile off; and did mortal man ever see the water of so hideously ugly a colour before?"

The thick mist that had been slowly gathering round, coming up from every point of the compass, like the four walls and ceiling which met and crushed the miserable prisoner in the story, had made the visible sea a mere narrow circle of water, which every moment was growing smaller and smaller. The swell, however, was fast falling, though it was still ponderous enough in all conscience; and, owing to the diminished compass of the deep, had a more formidable appearance than it wore even when at its worst, owing to the majestic waving of the near horizon. The decks were full of currents of air, caused by the wallowing of the schooner, but there was no wind on the sea. The folds of the swell were as polished as glass. Yet the creeping girdle of mist, and the violent panting of the ocean, and the malignant, sallow, bluish

tint of the water, as though it was putrefied, and the lowering lead of the sullen motionless sky over our staggering masts, filled the mind with a spirit of foreboding miserable to feel and impossible to express.

When the luncheon hour arrived I followed Sir Mordaunt into the cabin, where we found Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton. Before taking his seat, Sir Mordaunt went to his wife's berth, and then returned, accompanied by Norie, who, although greatly nauseated by the detestable rolling, was making a manful fight with it. He had been in attendance on Lady Brookes for the greater part of the morning. This was the first time I had seen him for many hours, and we shook hands like people meeting after a long absence.

I found that Mrs. Stretton was to lunch with us, which I attributed to Miss Tuke's invitation. But now that she was constantly with Lady Brookes, there was no reason why she should not make one of

our party, and drop her furtive life in Carey's cabin, and her secret meals with that lady's-maid. I was heartily pleased to see her among us. I had all along felt that Norie's banishment of her, merely because Lady Brookes might take fright at any reference to the horrors of the time spent upon the water-logged barque, was cruel usage to give to the poor shipwrecked woman, whose sex and loneliness, and the dreadful sufferings she had endured, gave her a powerful claim upon our tenderness.

"Do you think we shall have any more stormy weather, Mr. Walton?" asked Miss Tuke.

I answered that it would be very unusual if we met with another gale, as this was not hurricane month. "The air," said I, "is very thick, but a little wind may scatter that, and expose the blue sky again, which I for one shall be glad to see."

"The motion of the yacht is much less

violent than it was," said Sir Mordaunt. "The swell goes down fast, thank Heaven."

"Walton," cried Norie, "you do not catch me coming to sea again. An old sailor once said to me, 'Master, a square foot of dry land is better than an acre of shipboard.' And often did that observation rise in my mind whilst I was praying in the gale, and wondering how long a stout young fellow like me would take to drown."

"If your fright was so great, I wonder your hair preserved its colour," said Miss Tuke.

"My fright was very great; I don't deny it. Several times I thought we had upset," he answered.

"That's an honest admission for our friend to make in the face of such courage as you and Mrs. Stretton showed," said I to Miss Tuke.

"The bravery was Mrs. Stretton's," she answered. "Had she not encouraged me, I should have been as frightened as Mr. Norie.

"The fog must be upon us," said the baronet. "How uncommonly dark the cabin has become."

"Hark! What are they doing on deck?" cried Norie, whose nerves were in a condition to be easily alarmed.

"Making sail," I answered, hearing the tramp of feet and the sounds of coils of running gear flung down. "There is a breeze coming, or arrived."

In a few moments the vessel heeled over to starboard, sure evidence that canvas was on her and that wind was blowing. The inclination greatly steadied her, and there was a sensation of buoyancy in her movements as she swung over the swell.

"Can you read that tell-tale over your head, Sir Mordaunt?" I called out.

He stood up and looked at the compass with a pair of glasses that dangled on his waistcoat. The gloom was so deep that he had some difficulty to decipher the points. After a little, he said—

"We are heading South East by East."

I reflected, and said—

"That is not our course. Tripshore should be advised not to make any southing. We have a whole nest of islands under our lee."

He interrupted me.

"Let us go on deck, Walton, and see what they are about."

I threw down my knife and fork, and ran for my hat. Had it not been for the tepid temperature, emerging through the companion into the open air would have been like shooting into a London November day. The mist was as thick as smoke, greyish rather than white, owing to the sun being buried; and had you flung a biscuit over the yacht's side, it would have disappeared before it touched the water, so short was the span of visible sea from the yacht to the concealing folds of vapour. The mist was like a driving rain, and the decks were dark with the saturation of it.

The breeze was sweeping the vapour in masses along with it, and whitening the near water with streaks and glancings of foam. The yacht was close-hauled. They had set the double-reefed mainsail and standing and outer jibs, and this canvas was as flat as pancakes under the tautly-bowsed sheets. Indeed, our main boom was very nearly amidships. The send of the head swell stopped the schooner's way, and she was jammed too close to the wind to take much propulsion from the canvas that was stretched like drum-skins fore and aft her. I was bitterly vexed to find the wind sticking in the east. Tripshore came up to us the moment we appeared.

"Do you think you are wise in making any southing?" I asked him.

"Why, sir," he answered, "if Mr. Purchase's reckoning is right, we have plenty of sea room with our head at this."

"But Mr. Walton is persuaded that we

are further to the westward than Purchase allows," said Sir Mordaunt.

"Give the matter a moment's consideration, Tripshore," said I. "Will you agree with Purchase that our drift during the gale was only thirty miles?"

"I'm agreeable to double that, sir," he answered. "But even then there's nothing in the way, heading as we go."

"Fetch the chart," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "There's only one road to be taken—and that's the right one."

The man quitted the deck, and I walked aft, to see what leeway we were making. The wake was short, broad, and oily, and veered away on our weather quarter. With my hand upon the compass card, I made it about two points. This was as much leeway as one would look for in a ship under close-reefed topsails. It did not surprise me, however. I knew, under certain conditions, that few schooners could hold their own on a wind better than the

Lady Maud, but the luff choked her. She was under small canvas, and, looking as she was almost right in the wind's eye, it was wonderful that she made any headway at all.

To save this leeway, I thought it would be advisable to ease off the sheets a trifle; but the responsibility of making any suggestion in the midst of weather as thick as mud, and in the face of my complete doubts of Purchase's accuracy as to the position he affirmed us to be in, weighed down my anxiety, and determined me to hold my peace for the present. The weather, I said to myself, may clear before nightfall, and then I shall be able to find out where we are.

After a brief absence, Tripshore returned with the chart. He laid it upon the skylight and we bent over it.

"You see, sir," said the mate to me, "if Mr. Purchase be out even by three times the drift he allows for, this here course of

South East by East heads us well into the open, away from that there raffle," indicating the Bahama group to the south of Providence Channel.

"But suppose our longitude should be to the west of 74° ?" said I. "Go and look over the stern, and mark the leeway, and then take notice of this island," pointing to the island of San Salvador.

"Ay, Walton," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, "but why do you want to give us so much west longitude? Allowing that Purchase is out as far as you say, you don't believe that he is further out still?"

"I don't know," said I. "I have no faith in his calculations. Who can swear that his latitude is right?"

Sir Mordaunt peered at the chart, and then said—

"What do you propose, Walton?"

"Since you ask me plump," I answered, "I should like to see the yacht on the starboard tack."

"That 'ud be running away from where you want to go to, sir, wouldn't it?" said Tripshore, smiling, and speaking as if he thought me needlessly nervous.

"We certainly don't want to do that," cried Sir Mordaunt, quickly. "We must get to Kingston as soon as ever we can."

I made no answer to this. Though Tripshore meant no offence whatever by smiling, he had annoyed me, nevertheless, by doing so.

"Go and call Purchase up," said Sir Mordaunt to the mate, "and tell him to bring the log-book, that we may go into the matter thoroughly. The fellow is not too drunk, I suppose, to explain his workings," he added aside to me.

I noticed that the mate hesitated.

"Cut along now, Tripshore!" exclaimed the baronet, impatiently. "This is an anxious time, and I must have Purchase on deck."

The man went away. At this juncture

Miss Tuke and Norie showed their heads above the companion.

"Don't come on deck, Ada, don't come on deck!" instantly called out Sir Mordaunt. "This mist will wet you through. Norie, oblige me by handing my niece below; and keep the ladies amused there, will you?"

"With pleasure," answered the doctor. "But I say, Sir Mordaunt, if it's too damp for us, it's too damp for you and that fragile creature, Walton. The air is full of rheumatism."

"Yes, yes; we'll be following you shortly. Away with you, Ada." And as they disappeared he said, "I don't want them to suspect any grounds for anxiety. My wife knows that the gale is gone, and is much easier in her mind. Ada's eyes are like a carpenter's drill. And faith, Walton, she does not need to be so sharp either, for your face looks as full of trouble as an egg is full of meat."

"I *am* bothered," I answered. "It's a

devilish bad job, Sir Mordaunt, to be with a skipper you can't trust, and whose calculations you are sure are wrong, in weather of this kind, and with those leagues of Bahama Islands dead to leeward of us. And do you know, the wind freshens. It has breezed up since we have been on deck."

"Why doesn't Purchase come?" he exclaimed impatiently.

Just then the mate arrived. He looked greatly worried, but without any hesitation he marched up to Sir Mordaunt and said, "I'm sorry to say I can't rouse Mr. Purchase up, sir."

Sir Mordaunt looked at him with astonishment, and then muttered, "*It's too bad! it's too bad!*"

"Has he been drinking since he went below, Tripshore?" I asked.

"He has, sir. His cabin is full of the smell of liquor. It's not pleasant for me to peach on a shipmate, but if ye'll go below, gentlemen, you'll see it all with your own

eyes. He bargained for a four hours' spell, and has nipped fit to last him that time."

Sir Mordaunt took two or three impetuous strides.

"What's to be done?" he said, confronting me.

"What's to be done?" I ejaculated, almost contemptuously, I fear. "Why, break the drunken rascal out of hand, and take care to set the Board of Trade at him when you get ashore; so that, by depriving the incompetent 'longshoreman of his certificate, you may put it out of his power to imperil human life."

My poor friend eyed me anxiously, and then turned to the mate.

"Very well," said he. "Mr. Tripshore, you will take charge of this schooner."

The man touched his cap and was about to speak.

"For God's sake let us have no refusal," cried Sir Mordaunt quickly. "Mr. Walton will navigate the vessel."

"The run is only to Jamaica, Mr. Tripshore," said I. "Another week of sailing at the outside, I hope. If you like, I will keep watch and watch with you. Sir Mordaunt knows I have had confidence in you as a seaman from the beginning. You owe me something for my good opinion, so oblige me by giving the baronet the answer he wants."

The man still hung in the wind; but after thinking a little, he said, "All right, sir. I'll take charge. You may depend on my doing my best."

"At four o'clock the watch below will be turned up, Sir Mordaunt," said I, "and the crew had then better lay aft, that they may be told of the new arrangement."

"Certainly. Do whatever you think proper," he answered, looking harassed to death by this new bother.

I went below to consult the glass, but it offered no promise of improvement in the weather. Norie and Miss Tuke sat in the cabin, and the former wanted to know why

Sir Mordaunt and I kept in the drizzle. I made some answer and went up the steps, envious enough of the doctor's quiet enjoyment of Miss Ada's company to make me willing to call him aside and alarm him with a representation of our situation, and so stop his pleasure.

I went over to the chart again, and studied it attentively for some time, whilst Sir Mordaunt stood talking with Tripshore. The real trouble to me was, not being able to depend upon the observations Purchase had taken on the day before the gale. It is necessary that I should dwell upon this, that the sequel may be clear to you. Could I have been sure that his sights on that day were accurate, I should have been able to work out our position by the dead reckoning of those stormy days, so as to come near enough to the truth. But how was I to trust such data as an illiterate seaman like Purchase could furnish me with from his sextant? A trifling error by being repeated

would bring him fearfully wide of the mark in a corner of the Atlantic that is studded with dangerous reefs and low-lying islands. I own I now sincerely deplored my want of resolution in not insisting upon checking the man's calculations by observations of my own. I had acted mistakenly in suffering Sir Mordaunt to put me off discharging what was a duty owing to every person in that yacht by his weak and unwise tenderness for Purchase's "feelings." And I was also greatly to blame in not having ascertained the latitude and longitude from the steamer into which the rescued men had been conveyed, so that we might have compared her reckoning with Purchase's.

But ten years' absence from sea had very greatly disqualified me professionally, as any man may suppose ; and the weight of my present responsibility was not a little increased by this sense of my deficiency.

My disposition now was to put the schooner on the starboard tack. With her

head at north-east, the whole clear North Atlantic (as I then believed) would be under our bows. Yet Sir Mordaunt's unwillingness to go north when our way lay south influenced me in spite of myself, and I could not forget Tripshore's quiet smile that was like ridiculing my anxiety.

I rolled up the chart, and going over to the mate, advised him to take a heave of the lead.

"Very good, sir," he answered, and went forward to give the necessary instructions.

After a little the deep-sea lead was got up, and the line stretched along. The vessel's way was stopped by her head being shoved into the wind and the lead dropped overboard. The "Watch O watch!" rang mournfully on the breeze as the fakes fell from the men's hands, until it came to Tripshore, who was stationed right aft. Seventy four fathoms went overboard without giving us any soundings—hard upon four hundred and fifty feet, and no bottom.

"That looks as if the ocean was still under us, sir," said the mate cheerfully, as the line was snatched in a block, and the watch tailed on to haul it in.

Sir Mordaunt stood looking on, much impressed by these proceedings. He plucked up when he saw Tripshore grin and heard his remark, and said to me, "There is evidently plenty of water here, Walton."

"So there ought to be," I answered. "Meanwhile, Tripshore, I should recommend you to keep that lead-line coiled down ready for an occasional heave. When you can't see you must feel."

All this time the mist remained abominably thick. It was, indeed, a very fine rain, and it blew along our decks in a kind of smoke. The swell was greatly abated, but the heads of the seas as they arched out of the vapour broke quickly, and with a certain fierceness, and poured in foam against our weather bow. The schooner, in consequence of being sailed so close, crushed

through the water heavily and sluggishly, throwing off the spray to leeward in broad seething masses. With her housed topmasts and streaming decks she looked more to be struggling round the Horn than ratching in July upon the western Atlantic. And, indeed, nothing but a low temperature was wanted to make me believe myself off the Horn, with the long Pacific swell under me, and the air as thick as a feather-bed, and a sharp breeze rattling down out of the mist ; just as I remembered it when our latitude was 63° south, though then the decks were covered with ice, and the salt water froze as fast as it was chucked aboard.

At four o'clock the watch below was called. Tripshore came to me and asked respectfully if I meant to stand Purchase's watch. I answered that I had offered to do so, and was quite willing to keep my word.

"I've been turning it over in my mind, sir," said the mate, "and I doubt if the

men 'ud feel quite easy. You know what sailors are, sir. The crew have been taught to think of me and Mr. Purchase as their bosses, and of you as passenger."

"Who'll take turn and turn about with you, then?"

"There's Bill Burton, sir. Bill's our oldest hand, and a good man. The men 'ud mind Bill Burton."

Sir Mordaunt, who stood near, said, "As you are to navigate the yacht, Walton, it is only right that others should do the practical part. Tripshore takes Purchase's place, and so let Burton take Tripshore's, if, as you say,"—to the mate—"he is the best man for that duty."

"I'll warrant Bill Burton as a steady man, sir," said Tripshore. "He's as good a lookout as any sailor that I was ever shipmates with, and he's something more than a yachtsman."

"Let us consider that settled," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "And now the men should

be told of the change. Send them aft, Tripshore, or the watch below will be going to bed." And as the mate went forward the baronet added, "Will you talk to them, Walton?"

"They'd like it better from you," said I. "You pay them. You are their master."

"Very well," said he, and he fell to stroking down his beard whilst he thought over what he should say to them.

In a few minutes they were all assembled. Most of them were in oilskins, which glistened with the wet, and they stood looking eagerly—this being a novel summons indeed, and they could not imagine what it meant. Sir Mordaunt coughed and fussed and then rapped out:—

"I've sent for you to say that Mr. Purchase is no longer captain of my yacht. At this moment he is drunk in his cabin and incapable of coming on deck. Such conduct is scandalous in a responsible man. I don't believe he knows where we are within twenty

or thirty leagues, and yet there he is in his cabin, drunk and useless, and the weather so thick that you cannot see a boat's length from the side." ("It isn't the first time, sir," sung out one of the men.) "I know that. It's the third time. On the second occasion I gave him a good talking to, and he promised on his word as a man that he would not offend again. He's no longer captain. Our lives are too precious to be in the hands of a drunkard, though I always believed him to be a good seaman." (Some of the men laughed, but Sir Mordaunt took no notice.) "Mr. Tripshore will have command until we reach Kingston. Meanwhile, he will want somebody to help him to keep watch, and so I select William Burton. Step forward, Burton."

The man addressed made a stride, and looked around much astonished.

"You and Tripshore will head the watches," said Sir Mordaunt, "and I'll trust to your being a smart seaman to keep a

bright look out and help us all to bring the *Lady Maud* safely to an anchorage."

"I'm willing to obey any orders, sir," said the man, who was a short, thick-set, intelligent-looking fellow, with earrings, and a quantity of ringlets over his forehead and down the back of his neck, "but I hope this here setting me to head my watch means no difference 'twixt me and my mates? I'm only a plain sailor man, and don't want to be better nor my equils."

"They'll obey your orders, of course," answered Sir Mordaunt.

"That'll be all right, Billy; don't bother about that, mate," said a voice.

Just then old Purchase made his appearance. He stood a short distance before the mainmast, holding on to the little companion that led to the part of the vessel where his cabin was. The absorptive power of his "bibulous clay," as Southey calls the drunkard's body, had drained the liquor away from his head; but it was easy to see

that he was by no means yet recovered, and it looked as if the sight of Sir Mordaunt made him unwilling to trust his legs. He blinked at us in wonder at seeing all hands together in a crowd on the quarter-deck, but was too muddled to perceive or guess the cause of the assembly. The crew were not conscious of his presence, but we who looked forward saw him at once.

Tripshore sidled up to me and whispered, "He lay like a dead man, when I tried to rouse him up. But he can smell anything going on, and he knows how to pull himself together, Purchase do."

It was probably the seeing Tripshore edge up to me and mumble in my ear that made old Purchase roar out violently, "How was it no one called me at eight bells?" and knitting his brows and looking very fierce, the better to disguise the lingering effects of the drink in him, he let go his hold of the companion and came lurching along towards us.

At the sound of his voice all the men looked around. He stopped after making a few strides, and planting himself on his legs by setting them wide apart, in which posture he presented the most absurd figure that ever I saw in my life, he roared out again to Tripshore to explain why he hadn't called him at eight bells, that is, at four o'clock ?

"I'll answer you," exclaimed Sir Mor-daunt, very sternly, dropping his head on one side and raising his arm. "When some time ago the mate went to your cabin, to tell you I required your presence on deck, he found you in a drunken sleep—too drunk to wake up."

"Me!" said the old fellow, putting on such a face that in an instant half the crew were broadly grinning. "Me—Purchase—too drunk to wake up?" He tapped his breast and fell back a step. "No, no," says he, smiling foolishly and looking round him; "this here's some skylarkin' of Ephraim

Tripshore's. Tell Sir Mordaunt it's a bit o' tom-foolin', Ephraim. Lor' bless ye, mate ! I never was drunk in my life."

"Your're drunk now," cried Sir Mordaunt, warmly, seeing nothing diverting in this exhibition. Indeed, all the time he was incessantly glancing behind him at the skylights and companion, as if he feared that some echo of what was passing would reach his wife's ears. "You are superseded, sir. I shall discharge you at Kingston, and perhaps prosecute you for this conduct. You gave me your word that you would drink no more. You have broken your promise. You are a drunken fellow, and utterly unfit for the responsible position you have filled. Go back to your cabin, sir. I have given the command to Mr. Tripshore, and William Burton will assist him. We shall manage very well without you, and a deal better than with you. So go below, Mr. Purchase, and don't let me see your face again, sir ; and if I hear of you swallowing

another drop of spirits before you are out of my vessel, I'll have you locked up in your cabin."

All this was delivered with an energy that surprised me in my friend. No doubt it was the nervous irritability induced in him by the worries, anxieties, and dangers of the past few days, and our present uneasy condition, that enabled him to rap out so smartly. The men were astonished at this vehemence in their mild-mannered master, but old Purchase was absolutely confounded. After the baronet had ceased, he stood staring at him with his mouth open ; then slowly rolled his eyes around on the faces of the men, as though he would persuade himself by an inspection of their whiskered faces, ashine with the muggy, lukewarm, driving drizzle, that he was not in a drunken dream. Presently his gaze rested upon my face.

"Ha, Mr. Walton!" he bawled, extending his great clenched fist toward me. "It's *you* I've got to thank for this, I suppose.

It's you that's pisoned Sir Mordaunt's mind against me ! "

I looked at him coldly. He was proceeding.

"Will you go away ?" cried Sir Mordaunt.

The old fellow, retreating a step, shook his clenched fist at me.

"*You* call yourself a sailor ?" he shouted, in the thickest and deepest notes I had ever heard rumble from him. He drew a deep breath, and added, "You're a marine ! You're a sea-cook ! A sailor ? Why"—he drew another deep breath—"as sure as ye stan' there——"

I was never a man to be menaced. I stepped hurriedly towards him, but at the first movement I made he rounded on his legs and started for the companion ; and, drunk as he was, he managed to scull himself along fast enough to swing himself down the companion steps before I could reach the hatch, and vanished amid a half-

suppressed shout of laughter from the crew.

Sir Mordaunt had nothing more to say to the men, so they went forward, and Bill Burton, as they called him, was left to stump the deck of the schooner for a couple of hours. I could not help laughing at the gravity and look of importance the man put on. He had a nose like the bill of a hawk, and the wet collected on his face and streamed away from the point of his nose in large drops. He stepped the deck as regularly as a pendulum, his walk extending from the taffrail to abreast of the mainmast, and every time he came to a stop, before slueing round, he would dry his eyes on the knuckles of his claws, take a hard steady squint at the fog on either side and ahead, cast a prolonged look aloft, and so start afresh, swinging along in a gait that was an indescribable roll, his arms swaying athwart his body, and the fingers of his hands curled as though they still grasped a rope.

Sir Mordaunt now went below to change his clothes, which hung upon him like wet paper. I crossed over to Bill Burton as he came along, and said it was a pity that Purchase should not have held his drinking habit in check until he was ashore, or until the weather improved.

"Well, I don't mind telling 'ee, sir, I never took him for much," he answered. "We all knew he was given to"—here the man imitated the action of drinking—"for most of us in our tricks at the wheel in the night, when you gents was turned in, have seen him cruising about in a way that proved his ballast was i' the wrong end of him. But it wasn't for us to take notice."

"I should have supposed the speech he made to you, when the watches were called for the first time, enough to ruin him in the confidence of the crew," said I.

"Ay," he answered. "That was a rum speech. I doubt if he had his head when he talked that slush."

"What drift should you think we made in the gale, Burton? You'll allow for the send of the heavy sea, and recollect that our freeboard was tall enough to scud under every time we were hove up."

He reflected, and said, "Two mile an hour, might it be?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, I should say that, sir."

"That would bring it hard upon a hundred miles," said I.

"It wouldn't be much less," he answered. "I've been going to leeward two mile an hour under bare poles in a heavier craft than this vessel."

"Purchase allows only thirty miles for drift in the gale," said I.

He went to the rail to spit, as a mark of contempt. "My 'pinion is," said he, coming back, "he never saw a real gale o' wind afore this woyage."

"That's my notion, too," said I. "He's not only out in his dead reckoning, but I

thoroughly question whether he was correct in his sights when he last took them. Therefore this thick weather and the wind dead in our eye is something to keep us uneasy. Even if Purchase's reckoning is right, the Bahamas are not far off. What instructions has Tripshore given you?"

"To keep her as close as she'll go, and take a heave of the lead every half hour."

"That's it. And let me add, if the vessel should break off by even a quarter of a point, put her about."

"Ay, ay, sir."

I went to look at the compass, and found it steady. The wind had not increased in weight, but it blew very fresh; and under the double-reefed mainsail the yacht's lee rail lay low upon the smother of foam which the bursting and chopping action of the little schooner threw up around her hull. The mist was as thick as smoke, and the water hardly to be seen outside the line of froth under the vessel.

"Is this thickness going to last?" I said to Burton.

"There's no tellin', sir. If you mustn't trust a squall ye can't see through, what's to be thought of stuff like this here?"

This sort of comfort might have suited Job, but it was of no use to me. I had been on deck all the afternoon, was wet through, as uncomfortable in body as in mind, and thought it about time to follow Sir Mordaunt's example, and dry myself.

"Keep a sharp look-out," said I, "and don't forget to 'bout ship if she breaks off;" and so saying, I gave my body a hearty swing to shake off the wet and save the cabin carpet, and went below.

Norie was stretched along one of the lockers, reading. I pushed past, being too wet to bother with his questions, and going to my berth, dried and reclothed myself, taking care to lay out my waterproofs in readiness for my next visit on deck. I lingered over this and other little jobs, and

when I returned to the cabin the lamps were lighted, and the steward was laying the cloth for dinner. Miss Tuke, her uncle, Mrs. Stretton and Norie were seated in a group near the piano.

My first glance was at the tell-tale compass: the course remained unchanged. Sir Mordaunt, seeing me do this, called out:—

"Every hour of this should be carrying us well to the eastward, Walton."

"With two points leeway?" I exclaimed, with a shrug.

"Is there no means of preventing that leeway?" he asked.

"Setting more canvas would do it," I answered; "but the vessel has as much as she wants. The other way is by easing the helm—but you know I don't advise that. Indeed, I have taken the liberty to order Burton to put the yacht on the other tack should the wind veer to the south'ard by even a quarter of a point."

All this talk was Hebrew to Norie and the women, who sat looking on and listening.

"No doubt you are right," said the baronet.

"You know," said I, "that I should like to see the yacht on the starboard tack, heading well to the north and east."

"Away from our destination! Let her break off, Walton, before you put Jamaica over her stern," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, with a dull smile, and gravely shaking his head.

A short silence fell upon us. I broke it by inquiring after Lady Brookes; and then Miss Tuke asked what her uncle and I had been doing on deck all the afternoon, "getting wet through, Mr. Walton, and risking all sorts of illnesses, as Mr. Norie will tell you."

"We've been watching the weather," I answered.

"Not much weather to be seen, Walton," said Norie. "This looks to me like Novem-

ber detached from the other months and out for a cruise on its own account in the Atlantic. I shall behold the sun with interest when it shines forth again. It has not been in sight since the—let me see——” He counted on his fingers. “D’ye call this *summer* cruising?”

“How long shall you stop at Kingston, Sir Mordaunt?” asked Mrs. Stretton.

“I cannot say, madam; but not long, I believe,” he answered, with a look at me, to let me know that his intention of abandoning the cruise on his arrival there was not yet proclaimed. “We left England without meaning to touch at any port, unless our fresh water ran short. But the ocean,” said he, in a very sober voice, “makes a man’s programme an idle thing.”

The poor woman sighed at this; and, God knows, she had reason.

Dinner was now served, and we took our seats.

“It is a great pity,” said I, “that Lady

Brookes keeps herself imprisoned in her cabin. Company and conversation should do her more good than Carey and solitude."

"She is best where she is," said Norie; "at all events, until we get fine weather. Robust fellows like our friend, Sir Mordaunt, have no sympathy with delicate nervous organizations. A hungry man wonders at another's want of appetite. A man whose heart beats strongly wonders at people feeling cold. You should study medicine, Walton, if you want to sympathize widely."

"Mr. Norie means that you should make people suffer first, in order to feel for them," said Miss Tuke.

But talk of this kind was very flat, stale, and unprofitable to me, and I dare say to Sir Mordaunt too, in our present humour. I was repeatedly glancing at the tell-tale, hoping to find the schooner breaking off, that we might have an excuse to get upon the other tack. Although it was only six o'clock, it was as dark as a pocket outside

with the fog, and the skylight windows stood like squares of ebony overhead. The heat was no longer an inconvenience, owing to the draughts of chilled air that breezed down through the windsail. Likewise, the swell was greatly moderated, and, though the piping wind raised a bit of a sea, there was nothing discomfiting in the movements of the yacht. In truth, we had been well seasoned by the gale. After the mountainous surges of the three days, the tumble that a brisk wind stirred up was not a thing to notice.

Sir Mordaunt was as reserved as I; the others chatted freely. Mrs. Stretton, who had lived a few months in Jamaica, talked about the scenery there and the negroes, and their strange superstitions; and I particularly remember her description of a mountain, seen from the sea at sunrise—how the mountain on top seemed a solid mass of red fire forking out of the snow-white wreaths of clouds and vapour which

girdled the lower parts. She spoke with animation, and her rich accents lent a singular charm to her language. She interested the baronet, in spite of himself; and it was the attention he gave to her speech, whilst she was describing the Jamaica scenes she knew, that warmed her up into fluency and spirit; for she was *triste* enough when we first sat down to dinner, and whenever she was silent and listening to the others, the sad look came into her face. Somehow, I had never felt more sorry for her than I did on this day and at that table.

The comfort and luxury of the rich sparkling interior was made sharply sensible to the appreciation by the dismal, dark, damp, oppressive weather without, and my perception of it heightened by this cause set me contrasting the situation of the poor woman with hearty sympathy. I thought of Lady Brookes; the love and solicitude bestowed on her; her freedom from anxiety;

her husband's ample estate, that made her life as delightful as existence can be made for a woman by money in the hands of a husband who lives mainly for her and her pleasure ; and then I thought of this poor widow, newly snatched from a horrible peril, her husband drowned in her sight, and herself a beggar, as she had as good as hinted.

But sufficient for the day, thought I, is the evil thereof. Let us first get out of this weather, and find out in what part of this corner of the Atlantic the yacht is before we vex our souls with other considerations.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR MORDAUNT was the first to quit the table. He apologized for leaving us, and went to his wife's cabin, saying, as he rose—

"If you are going on deck, Walton, I'll join you there presently."

On this I quitted my seat, too anxious to linger ; and going to my cabin, put on my waterproof coat and returned. Miss Tuke stood at the foot of the companion steps, looking up at the darkness. She said to me, with a glance around at Mrs. Stretton and Norie, who remained at table, though the widow had followed me with her eyes as I passed along—"Mr. Walton," says she, in a low voice, "what makes you and Uncle Mordaunt so dull?"

"If your uncle is dull," said I, "and I don't know that he is, his wife's condition will answer your question about him. As for me, I am as cheerful as a man can be in a fog."

"No, no ; you are dull too, Mr. Walton. Pray what is it ? You can trust a sailor's daughter," says she, coaxingly. "Nothing you can say will frighten me."

"I give you my word of honour there is nothing whatever the matter. There is a dense sea-fog around us ; and as Purchase's calculations, and, maybe, the man himself, are not to be depended on, I am merely going to lend a hand on deck for a short while, to keep a look-out."

I saw she did not believe me, though I spoke the truth. She eyed me gravely and earnestly, and I was willing she should look as long as ever she pleased, for I, too, could look at her closely, with good excuse for so doing. Suddenly a little smile kindled in her pretty eyes, as she said softly—

"Well, Mr. Walton, join us here again as soon as you can. We are dull without you;" and she went back again to the dinner table.

To my sight, fresh from the sparkling cabin, the air seemed pitch dark. I stood at the companion for some moments, waiting for my eyes to get used to this profound blackness. I then saw the rays of the binnacle lamp striking into the thick mist like luminous gold wire. Anon I could faintly distinguish the outline of the bulwarks over against me on the other side, and a fragment of the mainmast where the haze from the skylight fell upon it. But that was all. For the rest, as the French say, I might have had my eyes shut.

This being the second dog-watch, I knew Tripshore would be on deck, so I called his name.

"Here, sir," he answered, and came to my side.

"Have you kept the lead going?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "but we get no bottom."

"And we want none, Tripshore. Have you seen anything of Purchase?"

"No, sir. His cabin door 's to, and I allow he's turned in and asleep."

"The wind keeps steady," said I; "but so fresh as it is, I wonder it doesn't blow away this mist. The weather is thicker than it was. It's like smoke. I never remember the like of it," said I, facing to windward a moment, and then gladly turning my back on the blinding, penetrating drizzle.

"The men have grown anxious since Sir Mordaunt talked to 'em," said Tripshore, after a pause. "They're not used to weather o' this kind, and they've took it in their heads that Mr. Purchase is all out in his reckonings. His being in drink at a time like this is a bad job, sir."

"We can manage without him," said I.

"Why, yes, sir. It 'ud be a poor look out if we couldn't."

"If the men," I continued, "were all of them salt-water men like you, they'd find nothing to disturb them in the loss of such a skipper as Purchase. I feel as safe again with that drunken fellow under the deck for good."

"Oh, it isn't *him* the men mind," he exclaimed. "They reckon nobody aboard knows where we are, and they don't like that."

And small blame to them, thought I, but I said nothing.

"However, when the weather clears they'll brighten up with it, I daresay," he added.

"You will remember, Tripshore," said I, "that you had confidence enough in Purchase's reckoning to fancy that I was over uneasy when I told Sir Mordaunt that I should like to see the yacht on the starboard tack."

"You may be right, sir, though," said he, quickly.

"In my own mind," said I, "I am con-

vinced that we are further to the westward than we know of. I may be wrong. It is because I can't be sure, that I don't insist upon heading away to the norrard."

"If you'll give the word, I'll put the yacht round at once," said he.

"Not without Sir Mordaunt's leave. He wants to fetch Kingston as soon as he can, and dislikes the idea of turning tail upon it. When he comes on deck——"

But before I could finish my sentence he arrived. That is to say, he came up the steps, but stopped before he reached the top of them, and stood there like a man struck blind.

"My God!" he ejaculated, "what a night!"

I sung out cheerily, "Come along, Sir Mordaunt. It'll not be so black when your sight has lost the glare of the cabin."

"Oh, are you there, Walton?" he cried, and came on deck, but remained standing, as I had, in front of the companion.

"What a night!" he repeated. "It is not yet eight o'clock. Who is that near you?"

"Tripshore, sir," replied the mate.

"What sail is the vessel carrying?"

"Just what you left on her, sir—double-reefed mainsail, and outer and standing jibs, She's snug enough, and wants what she has if she's to ratch with the wind fore and aft her."

"Ay, and ratch she must," said I. "Tripshore is willing enough now, Sir Mordaunt, to see her on the starboard tack."

"But what's the good of going north Walton," he answered, "when we are heading well to the east, and when we know from the chart that it is all open sea that way as far as the coast of Africa?"

"Unless we have diminished our lee-way——" said I.

"There's no change in that, sir," interrupted Tripshore.

"Our course as we go, therefore, is South

East by South," said I. "Practically, then, we are steering a course parallel with the trend of the Bahama range. Nay, we are worse off even than that, for the trend of those islands is south-east. If we were certain of our whereabouts then we might find it safe enough to lie as we go. But in this weather, and without an atom of faith in Purchase's calculations, I'm for edging away to the norward and eastward."

"Mr Walton's right, sir," said Tripshore.

"Why, if you both think the yacht should be put about, let it be done," said Sir Mordaunt. "I'll not pit my wishes against your judgment."

The necessary orders were immediately given by Tripshore, whose eagerness was not a little flattering to me after the reception he had given my opinion some hours before. The helm was put up, to give the schooner plenty of way, and the brave little vessel, eased of her griping luff, began to *snore* through the water, whitening it all around

until the phosphorus and the foam of it threw out light enough to enable us clearly to see the whole figure of the hull, though within the rails all was as ebony, save where the skylight and the binnacle filled a space of the midnight blackness with a golden haze and shining lines.

The men had to get the yacht round by feeling. They knew where the running gear led, and groped about until they came to the places. When all was ready the helm was put down, and the flying schooner shot into the wind, her mainsail rattling like a roll of thunder, and the great main boom tearing at its hempen bonds like an elephant straining at a lasso. In a few minutes the head-sheets were flattened in, and I went to the compass and looked at it with a feeling of relief which I even then thought, and do still think unaccountable, considering that there was nothing but my distrust of Purchase to make me suppose our former course a perilous one.

Sir Mordaunt did not remain long on deck. I told him he could do no good by staying, that he merely risked his health by exposing himself to the malignant damp of this lukewarm, penetrating mist, and that I should not be long in following him.

And I was as good as my word. For after hanging about the deck for half an hour, the sight of the rich, comfortable, bright cabin, as I saw it through the skylight, tempted me beyond resistance. I waited until another heave of the lead assured me that there was nothing to be felt at eighty fathoms, and then I went below.

I believe our going below and sitting in the cabin reassured Miss Tuke. Besides, I was cheerful enough now that I had had my way, and Sir Mordaunt was likewise heartier and brighter in manner, as though his mind took its posture from my behaviour. They say that coming events cast their shadows before ; but I can answer for

our little company aft that not for a fortnight past had we been in a calmer and pleasanter mood. Besides, there was good news from Lady Brookes' cabin. Her spirits had recovered something of their tone, the smoother passage of the vessel had briskened her up, and Sir Mordaunt said that if the weather was fine to-morrow he hoped to have her on deck.

We were all careful to keep our conversation away from topics likely to recall what we did not wish to remember—the death of the mastiff, the water-logged barque, the terrible gale we had been struggling with. We talked chiefly of England, how strange it was to be without newspapers, and not to know what had happened in the time we had been away.

"Yes," says Norie, "think of the mass of news that will have accumulated by the time we return. Most of it we shall never hear."

"All my dresses will have become old-fashioned," said Miss Tuke. "How do the

ladies dress in the West Indies, Mrs. Stretton ? ”

“ In the newest styles,” she answered. “ But I believe they look for their fashions to New Orleans and the American cities.”

“ Who import them from Paris,” said Sir Mordaunt. “ So, Ada, you’ll not find yourself behind.”

“ But you’ll give us no time for judging, Uncle Mordaunt,” exclaimed Miss Tuke.

“ Well, well, never mind about that now,” said he. And then looking up at the compass, he turned to me and said, “ Is this part of the Atlantic much frequented by vessels, Walton ? ”

“ Not just hereabouts, I fancy. We’re too far north for the West Indian steamers, and hardly in the track, I should say, for vessels bound to the Gulph.”

“ Pray let us talk of dress,” exclaimed Norie. “ We’ve been so fearfully nautical lately, that it’s quite a relief to think of shops and shore matters. Mrs. Stretton,

you were saying——" And here he jabbered about West India dress fashions, and so plied the poor woman with questions that presently we were all talking about dress.

In this way passed the evening, until Miss Tuke, looking at her watch, said it was ten o'clock, and that she would go to her aunt and then to bed. Mrs. Stretton and she then wished us good-night, and withdrew. Shortly afterwards Norie, who never showed any disposition to linger over the grog when Miss Tuke was gone, delivered himself of a loud yawn, shook hands, and went to his cabin. Sir Mordaunt lighted a cigar, I a pipe, and we sat for a while smoking in silence, listening to the stifled hissing of the water washing along the sides of the yacht, and to the straining of the bulkheads as the vessel rose and sank.

Presently, and without speaking, the baronet went to the foot of the companion steps and looked up.

"The night remains terribly dark," said

he, coming back. "I had hoped to see a star. Surely such a fog as this must be very unusual here at this time of the year."

"You must be surprised at nothing that happens in the way of weather at sea," I replied. "I remember the master of a brig telling me that he once made a voyage from London to Barbadoes without meeting with the North-East Trades."

"This dreadful thickness makes one think of collisions, Walton."

"I suspected that was in your mind," said I, "when you asked me that question about this part of the Atlantic being frequented by ships."

"But what do you think?" he inquired, nervously.

"I should not allow any fear of that kind to trouble me," I replied. "The odds are a thousand to one against a collision in a great sea like this."

"You always put a hearty face on those ideas," he said, relaxing. "No doubt you

are right; but this last week has tried me severely. Purchase, too, has worried me greatly; and such is my mood at this moment, that I would gladly give five hundred pounds to be safe in harbour—at Kingston or anywhere else."

"I hoped you had recovered your spirits," said I, grieved by this breaking down in him. "You have been very cheerful for the last hour or two."

He filled a tumbler with brandy and water, and swallowed a draught, and then sat silent, uneasily combing down his beard with his fingers, and holding his extinguished cigar, which he looked at without relighting.

"Shall you go on deck again?"

I answered, "Yes, to have a last look round."

He glanced at the skylight, as if he had a mind to go too; but, guessing his intention, I advised him to keep below, to go to bed indeed. "The chances are," said I, "that

when you wake the sky will be blue, and the yacht buzzing merrily along under a bright sun to Jamaica."

"Ay," said he, "but do Tripshore and Burton know the course?"

"The schooner is in my hands," said I. "Only let the sun shine, and I'll engage that Tripshore and Burton con the vessel correctly. While this fog and this wind hold, we have nothing to do but to keep as we go."

He looked at me with a musing expression, and then, holding forth his hand, he said, "Very well, Walton; I'll obey your orders and go to bed. I commit our safety to you and Tripshore."

We shook hands cordially, and he went along the cabin, pausing, when under the skylight, to look up, and then closing the door softly after him.

I put on my waterproof coat and went on deck. It wanted twenty minutes to eleven. I thought the fog had thinned somewhat,

and I crossed the deck to look to windward. Yet though the mist was undoubtedly less dense, gazing over the side was like staring at a black wall. The driving fog of fine rain made my eyes tingle, for the wind was strong, though so warm, that it felt like the gushing of air from the engine-room of a steamer. Nothing of the water was visible but the boiling foam churned up by the yacht's bows thickly interlaced with long fibres of phosphorescent light. Sometimes, when a wave broke a short distance from the vessel, the flash of its foaming crest shone out through the mist, but nothing else of it was distinguishable.

Burton was in charge. I called to him, and told him that he must keep the schooner heading as she went. "Let her lie as close as she'll ratch," said I, "and shake it out of her. I would rather she crawled than ran, until the horizon clears. Those will be your instructions to Tripshore."

"Right, sir."

"How many men have you on the look-out?"

"Two, sir."

"Do your lights burn brightly?"

"I was forward just now, and they're as bright as the mist 'll let 'em be."

"Tell Tripshore to see to that, will you? and to keep a sharp look-out. I'd give a deal of money, Burton, to know within ten miles where we are. This fog is a bad job after our long westerly drift. Have you any notion of the currents hereabouts?"

"No, sir," he answered. "But we should be right as we go. I was looking at the chart along with Mr. Tripshore, and it shows northen but open water to the east'ards."

"I shall be up and down all night," said I. "I may take some rest upon one of the cabin lockers, ready for a call. It may clear up suddenly, and you or Tripshore must have me up at the first sight of a star. Add that to your instructions, lest I forget to tell him."

We stood talking thus, and flitting about the deck, stopping now and again for five minutes at a time to look ahead into the pitch black void, straining our eyes against the needle-like rain, in the hope of catching sight of a flaw, to let us know that the mist was breaking, until eight bells—midnight—were struck. The men forward thumped the fore-hatch, and bawled to the watch below to rouse out. Tripshore came aft. We heard him calling, otherwise we should not have known he was on deck.

"Here!" answered Burton.

The mate, groping his way in the direction of the man's voice, walked up against me.

"Is this Burton?" says he, feeling me, as a blind man would.

"No," I answered; "he's to the left of me."

He begged my pardon, and said, "That scowbank of a steward's turned down the cabin lights. Had he let 'em be, the sheen of the skylight would have helped a man to

see. It's like being smothered up in a blanket, Bill. I plumped agin the mainmast as I came along, and allow I've lifted a bump the size of a hen's egg over my right eye."

Burton repeated my instructions, and, after hanging about us a few minutes, wished me good-night and went below.

I was weary enough myself. A man usually is when he would rather not feel sleepy. The ten years I had spent away from the sea had robbed me of the old seasoning. The wet and the wind bothered and tried me. Nevertheless I remained on deck another hour, occasionally conversing with Tripshore, but for the main part hanging over the rail, first to windward, then to leeward, vainly striving to see a fathom beyond my nose, and watching—for the want of something to rest the sight upon and relieve it from the oppression of the heavy darkness—the pallid quivering of the rushing foam alongside, until the play of it,

and the shooting and throbbing of the whirling fires in it, made my eyes reel.

Even if I had not been predisposed to lowness of spirits, this spell of loneliness, and the foul black weather, and the groaning and moaning of the invisible deep, with now and again the shriek of a block-sheave high aloft, and the hollow flap of the hidden canvas, and the numerous disturbing and startling sounds which were jerked out of the rigging and spars in the blackness overhead by the sharp jobbing and jumping of the schooner, were quite enough to depress me.

But at last my eyelids felt as if they were made of lead. Once, while looking over the lee rail, I found myself dropping asleep, and awoke with a kind of horror at the closeness of the hissing foam. I could resist the inclination to sleep no longer, and, calling to Tripshore, told him I was going to lie down in the cabin, and that he would find me on one of the lockers on the port side coming abreast of the companion steps.

I then went below, removed my waterproof coat, and putting a soft pillow on the locker, laid myself along, completely dressed, and ready to jump up at a moment's notice. The cabin lamps had been turned down, and yielded a very feeble light. I could have sworn I should drop asleep the moment my head touched the pillow ; yet for at least twenty minutes did I lie, looking at the feeble lamps swinging to the motion of the vessel, and listening to the sounds in the cabin, and struggling to work out a kind of reckoning to myself, so that I might figure the yacht's position.

In the midst of this idle problemizing I fell into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER V.

I WAS awakened by a violent concussion. So heavy was the sleep from which I had been aroused, that I remained for a considerable space in a state of stupefaction. On my senses becoming active, I found myself sprawling on my back upon the cabin floor. I now supposed that I had been rolled off the locker by a heave of the vessel, and that the sensation of a strong concussion having taken place was due to my fall. I scrambled on to my feet, but scarcely was I upright when a terrible grinding and rending shock pitched me sideways on to the locker on which I had been lying. Men's voices were shouting overhead. I also heard the tramping of feet, the violent beating of

canvas, above all, the roaring and rushing of water.

I sprang to the companion steps, and as I gained them there was another tearing shock—I know not how to describe it. To say that it was like the vessel going to pieces, will convey no image to your mind. Rather figure your sitting in a house, and one side of it sinking suddenly a foot or two, and every joist and strong fastening cracking and shrieking, and the roof and the whole structure trembling and groaning, as if the building must crash in. I stopped, struck to the very heart by the unbearable and soul-sickening sensation. At that moment I was grasped from behind. I turned, and saw Sir Mordaunt, dressed only in his shirt and trousers.

"What has happened?" he cried.

"We have either been run into or we are ashore—the latter, I think," I answered. "For God's sake get the women dressed, and bring them into the cabin;" and, releas-

ing myself from his clutch, I sprang on to the deck. As my head came level with the companion, the vessel heeled over—over—over yet! I crouched down, breathless and waiting, convinced that the yacht was going. I heard the men shrieking in the blackness as they fetched away with the angle of the decks, and fell helplessly into the lee scuppers.

When on her beam ends the schooner remained stationary. I knew by the bursting of the seas against her side, and by the fierce sounds of sweeping water over my head, that she had beaten round with her broadside to the sea, and so lay. At the top of my voice I shouted out the name of Tripshore, but it was like speaking when a gun explodes. The main sheet must have parted, for the sail I supposed lay fore and aft to the wind, and the slatting of it was like the crashing of thunder. The sea to leeward was as white as milk, and the noise of its boiling was alone enough to deafen a man.

Added to this, every sea that struck the weather side of the vessel boomed with a deep and hollow note, and was followed by a wild splashing and tearing of water upon the deck. Had I not kept the shelter of the companion when the vessel stopped at her sickening heel, I must have gone overboard, for a sea came pouring over the bulwarks that washed like an ocean of fire—so vivid was the phosphorus in it—as high as my waist, and tumbled down the steps in a cataract that was like to flood the cabin. I had sense enough to check this by closing the weather door and top of the companion, and there I stood, confounded, horrified, dulled, so that I was like an idiot, I may say, by the dreadful darkness, unable to see anything but the white water, and hearkening to the shrieks of the invisible men which rose with an edge that made the bellowing of the canvas and the thundering of the bursting surges a maddening and distracting uproar indeed.

Whilst I stood thus, some one in the blackness on the starboard hand cried out my name.

"Who is that?" I shouted.

"Me — Tripshore, sir. For the Lord's sake stretch along and give me hold of your hand. I'm drowning down here." I could not see him, but I was visible to him in the faint haze of light that came up out of the companion. Rejoiced to hear his voice, I swung myself out on to the deck, and, grasping the companion with my left hand, I threw my legs wide apart and leaned down with my right arm out-stretched.

"Do you see me?" I cried.

"Ay, sir—keep so a minute," he answered, and presently I felt him seize my hand.

Now that he was close I could perceive his outline, but not his face. The deck sloped like the side of a steep hill, it was slippery as ice with the wet, and cataracts of water were incessantly rushing down it from over the bulwarks. The poor fellow could give me

no help, and I had to drag him up, which, by a desperate effort and putting forth my whole strength and will, I managed to accomplish, swinging him round into the companion, where he lay awhile on one knee, with his arm on the hand-rail and his head resting on his arm, quite spent and very nearly drowned.

All this while I heard no sounds in the cabin, and the men's voices on deck were stilled. The yacht lay dead on her side. Once only, and shortly after she had heeled over hard and fast aground, a sea raised and bumped her, and I heard the crash of timber aloft, and the sound of a mighty fall, but it was too dark to see what spar had gone ; and after that the schooner lay quiet, with the sea breaking against her port side, and shooting high into the air over her, as was to be known by the rattling of the sheets of water when they fell into the boiling whiteness to leeward.

I said to Tripshore, "Have you your senses ?"

"I'm better," he answered. "There's an ocean of water in the lee scuppers, and I was drowning in it. I feel full o' water. If I could be sick it 'ud relieve me."

"Where are the men?"

"Most of 'em drowned, I fear. Some of them have got away with the long boat."

"What time is it?"

"About half-past four."

"Oh, my God!" I cried. "If the daylight would only come, that we might see where we are!"

As I said this, I heard Sir Mordaunt calling my name. I went down the steps, and, turning round, found one of the cabin lamps brightly burning, and the whole party, —everybody who belonged to our end of the vessel,—standing at the table, which alone prevented them from slipping down the cabin floor. Sir Mordaunt grasped his wife round the waist with his right arm, and with the other held Miss Tuke by the wrist. Mrs. Stretton and Carey clung to each other, and

Norie stood beside them. Full of hurrying horror as that time was, I could yet find a moment to wonder at the supernatural calmness of Lady Brookes. She was as white as marble, but I could not question that she had her senses; and though she may not have known that at any instant the yacht might crumble to pieces under our feet, yet she surely comprehended that our peril was of the direst kind, that we were shipwrecked, lying broken and storm-swept upon some nameless reef, amid the blackness of a howling night.

Both Mrs. Stretton's and Miss Tuke's faces wore rather an expression of consternation than horror. Now and then Carey uttered a low moan—every time the water thundered on the deck she made that noise—otherwise no sound came from the women. Their silence indeed was almost shocking to me. In Lady Brookes I should have foretold a behaviour so different, so distracting, that her rigid posture and stony face smote me

like a prophecy of immediate death. It seemed to take all hope of life away, as if the bitterness of death had passed from her and the others, and they were waiting to die.

"What has happened, Walton?" said the baronet, in a strong thick voice.

"The yacht is on her beam-ends ashore," I replied. "Purchase's reckoning is diabolically wrong. I always feared so—yet I had hoped to escape this."

"What are we to do?" he said.

When he said this they all fixed their eyes upon me, with a dreadful eagerness in their expression—heart-moving beyond endurance, indeed, owing to their silence. I gulped down a sob, and struggling to master my voice, I answered, "We can do nothing until daylight comes. It draws on for five o'clock, and we shall have the dawn shortly. Let us pray God that the vessel will hold together—I think she will. She is strong, and can stand this buffeting unless she bumps."

"She is motionless," exclaimed Norie, in a broken voice. "I have not felt her bump for some time."

"Is there no way of finding out where we are?" cried Miss Tuke, wildly and suddenly. "Can we not get help from the shore?"

"It is as black as ink on deck," I replied. "There are no lights—there is no land to be seen."

"Oh, the water—the water! Listen to it!" shrieked Carey, cowering, and looking around her with eyes brilliant with terror.

A heavy sea had broken over the vessel and poured over the deck above us, and a bright flood came bursting and smoking down the companion ladder.

Lady Brookes threw her arms up, and Sir Mordaunt pressed her fiercely to him; but she remained as silent as a statue.

I called to Tripshore to close the companion and come down. I reckoned that if any of the crew were alive they would be in the forecastle. Be that as it was, we could

not let the cabin be drowned. Already the water was as high as the starboard lockers, and the cabin was small enough to be quickly flooded.

Tripshore descended with a faltering motion. No one but myself had known he was on top of the steps. His clothes were streaming, his sou'-wester had been washed off his head, and his hair was pasted on his forehead, throwing out his bleached face, and making him look more like a corpse than a man. There stood a decanter of brandy on one of the swinging trays, and with the utmost difficulty I managed to seize it and give it to Tripshore, bidding him put his lips to it and swallow a dram. In truth, numbed and confounded as my mind was by the sudden horror of our condition, I yet preserved sufficient presence of mind to foresee a vital value in this sailor if the wreck held together until the daylight, and that our lives might depend upon my recovering him from his half-drowned state.

I gathered hope when I found the yacht lying immovable. That she was bilged, I knew by the slow rise of the water to leeward in the cabin ; but, as I say, the rise was slow, and much of the water that was there had come down the companion ; and I guessed if the leak did not drain in faster than it now did, it would be a good bit past daylight before the water came high enough to drive us out of the cabin.*

The worst and most dreadful part was the heavy concussions of the seas which struck the windward side of the schooner, and kept her trembling like a railway carriage swiftly drawn. After every blow there would be a pause, and then down would come the water in tons weight, smashing upon the deck overhead, and washing in a loud roar over the bulwarks on the other side. Every instant I expected to see the companion carry away, or the skylight

* The hold was full of water, and the draining into the cabin was no doubt through the cabin floor.

dashed in. But, mercifully for us, these fixtures stood, so nobly and stoutly built was that vessel down to the meanest of her appointments.

What our position was at this time I will leave you to imagine. The heel of the yacht was certainly not less than fifty, ay, and may be, more than fifty, degrees. The swinging trays lay with their lee rims hard against the upper deck. So acute was the slope, that nothing but the interposition of the table prevented us from falling headlong down the incline. In the light of the lamp we stood looking at one another, all in silence, save but for the occasional screams or moans of alarm which broke from Carey, and once or twice from Miss Tuke, though never from Lady Brookes, when a wave beat upon the deck, and ran snarling and hissing away, like a score of disappointed wild beasts. I shall never forget the expression of anguish in Sir Mordaunt's face. I can recall no hint of fear in it. It was

bitter grief and horror, as if *he* were to blame for the frightful peril that with amazing swiftness had confronted the motionless, staring woman he clutched to his heart.

As for *her*, her passivity was as though a miracle had been wrought. I thanked God for it, for I knew how the agony of that time would have been heightened by her screams and terror. Yet it was wonderful that she, whom a thunderstorm had driven into hysterics, and who had fainted over the narrative of a disaster, should be standing there now as if all sensibility had fallen dead in her. Perhaps, indeed, this may have been the case. Her aspect was one of petrification, or, it might be that her senses were paralyzed by the first alarm, and were unable to take in the full meaning of our situation. She often turned her glittering eyes on me, and stared as though she beheld an apparition. It was a positive relief to see her toss her hands

when the water above boomed thunderously. Suddenly Tripshore made a movement.

"Where are you going?" I asked, sharply.

"To see if anything can be done for our lives," he answered.

"Stay where you are!" I cried. "If you show your head above the companion you'll be washed overboard; and I won't have the doors opened. When the dawn comes you'll see it on that skylight. What *can* be done now, man? It's pitch dark still. Could we see to launch a boat? Would those breaking seas allow us to enter a boat? Stay where you are, I say. Here, at least, we have a refuge."

"Can nothing be done?" exclaimed Miss Tuke, with a dreadful note of despair in her voice.

"Yes, yes," I answered. "Everything that can be done *shall* be done. But it will be madness to leave this cabin until the dawn comes, to let us know where we are and what we can do."

"Have you no rockets to send up?" cried Mrs. Stretton.

"They'll be drowned by this time, sir," said Tripshore, addressing me. "They're in the fore peak. There 'll be no getting at 'em."

"They would not help us," I said. "They would not show in this mist; though could we come at them we might fire them through the companion."

"I'll try and get 'em, if you like," said Tripshore; "but unless yon bulkhead can be broke through, I shall have to go on deck to get down the fore hatch."

"No, don't risk that," exclaimed Sir Mor-daunt. "The dawn will be here soon. Mr. Walton is right; we can do nothing in this blackness."

Nothing; nor did I regret the want of the rockets, for from the first I never doubted that we were aground upon one of the Bahama shoals, miles out of sight of inhabited land, and that there was no eye

but God's to behold our signal of distress, though we should make a blaze as big as a burning city.

The steady posture of the yacht, and my confidence in her strength, kept my heart up; and I endeavoured to cheer my companions by pointing out that the wind might drop with the rising sun, and that, though we had lost two boats, we had another large enough to contain us all. Likewise, that we need not doubt of being able to make our way to one of the numerous islands which lay scattered broadcast upon these seas, where we should get the relief we stood in need of.

Sir Mordaunt asked Tripshore where the rest of the crew were. The man answered that he feared some of them were drowned, but he could not say for certain: he supposed those who lived were sheltering themselves in the forecastle.

I was sorry he answered the question in that way. His reply was a dreadful shock

to the women. His saying that he feared some of the men were drowned gave a most crushing sense of realness to our awful situation. Miss Tuke's face contracted as with an agonizing spasm, and Mrs. Stretton cried bitterly. Lady Brookes said something to her husband—I did not catch the words—and he laid her head against his shoulder, and soothed her with the most endearing gestures, at the same time looking at me with a heart-broken expression in his eyes.

In this manner we stood waiting to see the dawn brighten upon the skylight windows, listening with terror to the weary crashing of the seas, feeling with unspeakable dismay the dreadful occasional quivering of the hull, and I at least scarcely daring to hope that the vessel could much longer withstand the cruel hammering of those pounding surges.

CHAPTER VI.

THE light seemed a long while coming, but at last the dawn stood upon the skylight glass. Miss Tuke was the first to notice it. She cried out, "The morning has broken, Mr. Walton," and pointed to the skylight.

I immediately clawed my way along to the steps, and ascended them, followed by Tripshore. I opened the starboard companion door cautiously, and peered forth. The fog was all gone and the air clear, but the sky very cloudy. The light was but a glimmering grey as yet, but it broadened and sharpened quickly whilst I stood gazing, and then the whole wild picture of ruin and desolation was clear before me.

The yacht lay with her bows very high

in the air, and her stern correspondingly deep, and hence it was that all the seas which struck her rolled their volumes over the quarter-deck, leaving the forecastle comparatively free; that is to say, the falls of water there were much less frequent than they were aft, and a great deal less weighty and dangerous. A short distance away on the starboard beam trended a low line of dark shore, the full extent of which I could compass with the eye. It was indeed, as I immediately perceived, a low, flat island, with a little space of rising land down in the east quarter of it. Between the yacht and the near beach was a tract of white water, that boiled and leaped in pinnacles and spears, as you may see water play on shoals. It was like milk for whiteness, and was raging a long way both ahead and astern of the schooner, whose starboard bulwarks lay over into it, and it constantly washed in a heavy smother of froth over the rail in such a manner, that had the heel of the yacht

been less sharp, the whole deck from the forehatch would have been under water. As it was, the flood stood as high as the bulwark rail, and extended as far inboard as the companion in which I stood, and in this lake of water, that was constantly being lashed into fury by the torrents pouring over the weather side, lay four drowned men, one of whom was Purchase. The foremast was gone about ten feet above the deck, and the wreck of it lay over the side. Every movable article had been swept overboard. The boat we carried amidships had disappeared, and the boat that hung at the davits had been broken in halves by a blow from a sea.

This is but a cold description. But, my God ! with what agony of soul did I contemplate this dreadful scene of ruin, the drowned bodies, the horrible white water utterly cutting us off from the land, and, above all, the stormy look of the sky, that threatened a gale of wind !

Sir Mordaunt had left the women and crawled up the companion steps, but being unable to see, owing to Tripshore and me blocking the companion, he asked me if I could perceive land, and what our position was. I was too affected to answer him, and motioned Tripshore to descend a few steps, so as to give the baronet room to see for himself. The moment Sir Mordaunt looked at the deck and the land he uttered a bitter cry and reeled backwards, and had I not thrown my arm round his neck he would have fallen to the bottom of the steps. The sight of those drowned men, his wrecked and broken yacht, and the boiling water that cut us off from the shore, nearly drove him crazy.

But whilst I was supporting him, my eye lighted on the figure of a man standing on the beach, as close to the water as the heavy breakers would permit. He flourished his hand and shouted to us, but though I could hear his voice very faintly, his words were absolutely indistinguishable.

"Look ! " I cried. " If that island is not inhabited, then yonder must be one of our men. For God's sake, Sir Mordaunt, pluck up your heart and help me to think how to act. Tripshore, come on deck ! There's one of our crew ashore."

To make room for him I got upon deck, and squatted to leeward of the companion, to shelter myself from the flying water.

"It's Bill Burton, I believe, or Tom Hunter—one or the other," exclaimed Tripshore. " Oh, Lord ! if we could only chuck him the end of a line, he'd be able to drag us ashore."

This, maybe, was the one hint I needed to set my mind struggling. The look of the sky was a clear intimation that there must presently come such a sea as would break up and scatter the schooner, as her boats were already scattered. I sprang to my feet, and, watching my chance, crawled to the weather bulwarks, and crept along on my hands and knees until I came to the forecastle, where,

as I have said, the water was not flying heavily. This did not bring me closer to the man ashore, but I could stand erect here without great peril of being swept overboard, providing I held on tightly, and so could make him see me.

He saw me the moment I stood up, as I perceived by the manner in which he hallooed and flourished his arms. At the top of my voice I shouted to him, "Can you hear me?"

The wind blew my voice to him, and he immediately made an affirmative gesture.

"If we can manage to send you the end of a line, look out for it, and make the end fast," I bawled.

He again raised his hand.

By this time Tripshore had joined me, and, looking towards the companion, I perceived Sir Mordaunt and his wife and Norie on the steps, watching us.

"Tripshore," I cried, "we must get a rope's end ashore somehow. How is it to be done?"

We stood staring about us in a torture of perplexity.

"If we made a line fast to the half of that boat," I said, pointing to the broken boat at the davits, "would the wind drift it ashore, think you?"

"Ay, sir, it might—it might! Stop!" he shouted. "I have it! Where's the dog?"

"Yes!" I cried, the full significance of his meaning flashing upon me before the words had died on his lips. "If the beast be living he may save our lives!"

I ran my eyes eagerly over the decks, but the sea had torn up every fixture with the exception of the companion and skylights, and there was not a corner where the dog could have lain hid.

"Have you seen your dog?" I cried to Sir Mordaunt; but at that moment a heavy sea washed over the after part of the deck, and some shrieks from the women told me that a quantity of water had filled the com-

panion, driving down Sir Mordaunt and the others.

"If you'll look for the dog in the fo'ksle, I'll seek him in the cabin," exclaimed Tripshore. "Pray the Lord he's not overboard!" And as he said this he dropped on his knees and crept along under the bulwarks.

The forecastle was open. I threw my legs over, and feeling the ladder with my feet briskly descended. But the forecastle was half full of water, and it was up to my waist when my head was on a level with the upper deck. It was wonderful that the bulkhead that separated the forecastle from the after part of the vessel stood the weight: had it given, the cabin would have been drowned at once. I knew that nothing could be alive here. I peered and peered, to see if there was any one in the upper bunks, but nothing was to be seen but the water and some soaked bedclothes hanging over the edges of the upper bunks. Whatever else was there lay at the bottom, under water and out of sight.

This choking and gurgling and dark fore-castle so sickened my heart, that I stood holding on to the ladder, and looking with helpless horror like a man malignantly fascinated. But a sudden twitch of the vessel shocked me into my senses again, and I scrambled on deck, so persuaded that our end was at hand, that in the torment of my mind I could have flung myself overboard, so much crueller than death was this anguish of expecting it. I was scarcely on the fore-castle, however, when fresh life was given me by the sight of Tripshore approaching with the dog. He had the animal by the flesh of the neck, and came along like an animal himself, that is to say, on his knees and left hand. The water flew in sheets over him, but he escaped the terrible falls by keeping close under the bulwarks, and presently he was at my side with the dog, eagerly telling me that he had found him behind the arms-rack in the cabin.

I immediately pulled out my knife and

cut away some of the thin running gear which lay across the deck : they were top-gallant sheets and jib-halliards, long and light. I knotted them and other pieces of stuff together until I calculated they made a length of over sixty fathoms. I hitched one end over the dog's neck, taking care that the animal should have plenty of freedom, and yet that the hitch should not slip over his head either. He was streaming with water, and seemed to understand our peril. I patted and stroked and soothed him as best I could, pointing to the land, and bidding him swim to it, just as I would have talked to a man. The creature looked at me and whined. I patted him again, and then Tripshore helped me to raise him, and we carried him to the submerged side of the hull, walking up to our armpits in water, and there we flung him overboard into the whirl of froth. He sunk in the foam, and I believed that the weight of the wet rope had dragged him down ; but presently his head came up a

little distance away from the yacht. He turned, and tried to regain the vessel. I shouted and pointed to the land, gesticulating furiously in that direction, as did Tripshore, both of us menacing him with our fists to drive him shorewards, and standing with the water nearly up to our throats as I have said, but happily without danger from the toppling white seas to leeward, in consequence of the yacht's bows being hove high, and her hull sheltering the water just under her there.

For about a minute—to me an eternity—the dog swam round and round, and I was in the greatest terror lest the line, which I had given plenty of scope to, should foul his legs. He rose and sank upon the seas, swimming very well, and the foam blowing like drifts of snow over him. At last a sea lifted him high, with his eyes to the land, and from that moment he began steadily to make for it.

Seeing this, I told Tripshore to shout to the man on the beach to look out for the

dog. The animal had a large head, and it was impossible for the man to miss seeing him. As the dog swam, I carefully threw fake after fake of line overboard, giving abundance of slack, that the animal might be as little hampered as possible. The set of the tide—which I knew to be rising by feeling the twitching of the vessel—carried the dog somewhat to the eastward; but the strong wind blowing in a contrary direction greatly diminished the influence of the tide upon the brave brute, and with a transport of delight I beheld him slowly but surely approach the land, whilst the man on the beach encouraged him by smacking his knee and waving his arm.

In about ten minutes after having been thrown overboard, the dog was among the breakers. Had he been a man swimming for his life, this would have been the most desperate part of the undertaking. But I did not fear for the dog. I knew his great muscular power, and that his long narrow

body would not be greatly affected by the recoil of the breakers. And I was right; for presently I saw him flung up on top of a running sea, and as it broke upon the beach the dog sprang out of the foam and ran to the man, and lay down at his feet.

I now told Tripshore to look about him and select the stoutest-rope he could find and bend it on to the line, and tell the man to haul it ashore. He guessed my scheme, as, indeed, any sailor would, and fell to work with great energy and smartness. Whilst he cleared away the biggest rope he could come at, I crept along under the bulwarks, and, watching my opportunity, made a dash for the companion and swung myself into it before the sea could strike me.

The water was rising in the cabin fast, and in the lee side it lay like a lake. Sir Mordaunt and the others stood at the foot of the steps. I told them that the fore-castle was the safest place now, that very little water was coming over there, that the

dog had reached the shore with the line, and that under God's providence I was sure we should be able to save our lives.

"But you must come along to the fore-castle at once," said I. "The tide is rising, and the wind is increasing, and you may feel the vessel stirring with every blow. Sir Mordaunt, I will take your wife and Carey. You will take your niece. Norie will bring Mrs. Stretton."

So saying, I took Lady Brookes' hand and helped her up the steps, calling to Carey to follow. I left them standing in the companion whilst I crawled up the deck to a belaying pin that was just abreast of the hatch, over which I hitched a rope, so that the end came to the companion. With this we should be able to drag ourselves up under the shelter of the bulwarks. How full of peril this job of getting up those decks to the bulwarks was I hardly know how to express ; for it is impossible in words to put before you the picture of those

slippery inclined planks, and the incessant gushing and high leaping of solid bodies of green water over the after portion of the devoted hull, so that the foaming of the seas over the bulwarks as much resembled a river flooding a dam, and tumbling in a sheet of froth into a lower reach, as anything I can liken it to. Yet, owing to the acute inclination of the hull, the bulwarks so overhung the deck that the pouring water left a clear space immediately under them. To reach this clear space was now our business. I grasped Lady Brookes firmly around the waist, and seized the rope, but found I had not the strength to drag our united weight up by one hand. A sharp wrench of the vessel, accompanied by the grinding and cracking sounds of breaking timber, struck through me like a wound in the side. I shouted to Tripshore to come and help me, whereupon he dropped the rope that he was clearing away from the raffle, and crawled aft. I told him to station himself at the

belaying pin and haul the women up as I made them fast. Indeed, there was no other way of managing that business. I passed the end of the rope round Lady Brookes' waist, and bidding her have no fear, launched her up the deck as far as my arms could thrust her, and Tripshore hauled her up alongside of him, and so got her under the bulwark.

In this fashion we placed the other women under that shelter, though a sea dashed Carey down and nearly drowned her as Tripshore was dragging her up; and then telling the baronet and Norie to imitate my behaviour, I pulled myself up the deck, and with Tripshore's assistance got the women forward, where we were joined by Sir Mordaunt and the doctor.

It was now very evident, from the increasing oscillation of the yacht and the grinding of her bottom upon the reef, that the tide was making fast. There was great weight in the wind, too, and I knew that

the seas would grow bigger with the flood. I told my companions to hold fast to the ringbolts and cleats, or whatever else their hands could come at, and squat low out of the way of the rushing and shooting waters, and then fell to work with Tripshore to clear away the rope I wanted to stretch to the shore.

As well as my eye could measure the distance, the beach was about fifty fathoms away. All between was the broken, white water, in which no boat could have lived an instant, even had we had a boat to launch. Apparently the reef we had struck on was a shelf that would be dry in smooth water at low tide. The yacht had struck it bow on and run up it, then swung broadside round, leaving the forepart of her high.

The instant we had manufactured a warp we bent the end of it on to the shore line, and signalled to the man to haul in. This he did, and when the end came to his hand I bawled to him to make it securely fast.

There were some dwarf trees a short distance up the beach, and he carried the end of the warp to one of them and secured it. Could I have seen any handspikes lying about, I should have carried our end of the warp to the forecastle capstan and got a strain upon it; but not being able to use the capstan, all of us men tailed on to the rope, and with our united weight tautened it considerably.

"Now, Tripshore," said I, "I shall rig up a sliding bowline-on-the-bite on this rope, but it'll want two hauling lines—one to drag the bowline ashore, and the other to drag it back again. Can you reach the land by that warp?"

He looked at it and said, "Yes, sir."

"If you don't feel strong enough for the job, don't attempt it. I'll try. But if you have the strength, you'll be the likelier man."

"I'll do it," he repeated, and pulled off his coat.

With feverish haste I cleared away the deep-sea lead-line and hitched the end round

his waist; and in a moment he went over the bows, laid hold of the warp, and travelled along it hand over fist. It wanted a real sailor with a lion's heart in him to adventure such an exploit—a man used to hanging on by his eyelids, and with fingers like fish-hooks. The rope curved into a bight under his weight, and the white seas leaped and snapped at his feet, and sometimes buried him in foam as high as his waist. I watched him without a wink of the eye. Recalling my thoughts at that time, I may realize now the frightful intensity of my stare. I hardly seemed to breathe. Quite mechanically I let the lead-line slip overboard, as, foot by foot, he went along, making the warp jump with his jerks as one hand passed the other. One hundred yards seem but a short span; yet it made a fearfully long journey for that heroic man, and nothing but a brain of iron could have endured the sight of the furious, broken, tumbling water below. I say honestly, such was the condition of my

nerves, that I do not doubt, had I been in Tripshore's place, I should have let go, through inability to stand the sight of the giddy, sickening spectacle of whirling, flashing, torrent-like play of foaming waters over which he was passing.

Foot by foot he went along the rope. When near the breakers he paused, and my heart seemed to stop beating. Half his body—nay, the whole, indeed—would be swept by those rushing and shattering acclivities, and this appeared to be in his mind, or perhaps he was taking breath for the dreadful encounter. He began to move again. Nine or ten times did his hands pass and repass each other, and then a tall breaker took him and swept him right along the warp. It passed, and he swung back like a pendulum, and again proceeded. But the recoil of the same sea hove him along the warp again, and again he swung heavily. I prayed aloud to God to give him strength. Thrice was he beaten in that manner, and

each time left him swinging nearer the shore. The fourth time he let go, and vanished in the send of a breaker as it swelled in fury up the beach. The man who had been standing watching him darted towards the spot where he had disappeared, and plunged up to his middle in the water. Immediately after the form of Tripshore emerged, and both men ran up the beach.

Sir Mordaunt had watched this noble struggle as well as I, but Norie and the women sat crouched under the bulwarks, resembling bundles of clothes, never once uttering a sound. Indeed, Lady Brookes kept her eyes closed, and her arms hanging inertly down, and her white face made her look dead.

When I saw that Tripshore was safe, I seized a piece of stout rope and knotted it into the bowline that is used at sea for slinging men. This done, I hitched it with a large eye upon the warp, so that it should slide easily, and attached the end of the lead-

line that Tripshore had carried ashore with him to it. I also bent on to it a similar line, the end of which was to be retained on board; and all this being accomplished with the mad headlong haste that a man will make who works for his life, I went to Lady Brookes and took her arm, and speaking of the bowline as a noose, that she might understand me, I told her to make haste and get into it, that Tripshore and the other man might pull her ashore.

She opened her eyes and got up, being, indeed, compelled to rise by the force I was obliged to exert; but when she saw what she was to do, she uttered a terrific shriek, and fell towards her husband and clung to him.

I saw a dreadful difficulty here, and something to cruelly heighten the horrors of our position. But the yacht was beginning to bump heavily, and the seas which washed the after part of her in floods were threatening to sweep the forecastle.

"If her life is to be saved, she *must* do

it ! " I shouted to Sir Mordaunt. " The vessel is breaking up. If there is any delay we must all perish. For God's sake, for all our sakes, shut your ears to her cries, and help me to get her into that sling."

Made desperate by the peril of delay, I grasped the poor woman as I said this, but though the baronet did his best to assist me, he seemed crushed, broken down, without strength ; and never shall I forget his face as I dragged his shrieking wife into the bows of the yacht, nor my own shame and horror of soul at the violence I was forced to exert.

She was as strong as a man. She wrestled with me, she got her hand in my hair, and most assuredly she would have overpowered me, as I was scarce able to keep my footing on the deck, had not Norie come to my help. He grasped her hands from behind, another drag brought her close to the bow-line, I slipped it under her arms, and then seizing her by the waist, I lifted her bodily

over the bows of the yacht, and left her dangling upon the warp.

I was nearly spent with this dreadful struggle, but yet found voice enough to shout to the men to haul in steadily and quickly. Indeed, there was no great danger. She had only to hold her mouth closed when she neared the breakers, and keep quiet, and let the men drag her. But it was impossible to give her any directions. Her screams were frightful. Hardly had the bowline been dragged a dozen feet, when she caught hold of the warp, and prevented the men from hauling her. I yelled to her to let go, but my cries were only answered by her piercing shrieks.

"What is to be done?" I exclaimed to Sir Mordaunt, as the yacht thumped heavily on the reef, followed by a loud crash and splintering of wood.

"See—she has let go! Her head has fallen on one side! Oh, great God, has the fright killed her!" he cried.

I roared to the men to drag her along quickly. The warp was slippery with the wet, and the bowline travelled like a cringle upon a greased line. Twice the breakers buried the poor creature, and then they got her ashore and threw off the bowline, which I hastily hauled aboard.

I now called to Miss Tuke, and she got up without a word, her face of a shocking whiteness, her lips so tightly compressed that they were no more than an ashen line, but with a fine gleam of resolution in her eyes.

"Have no fear," I exclaimed. "Keep your mouth shut. The wash of the breakers won't hurt you then."

I passed the bowline under her arms, helped her over the bows, gave the signal to the men, and she was dragged along the warp, mute as a statue. The landing of such heroines as this was no labour. They had her ashore in less than two minutes, and though she had passed through one heavy

sea, yet the moment she touched the land she waved her hand to us, and then dropped on her knees beside the prostrate and motionless figure of her aunt.

Her fine example heartened Mrs. Stretton, who was ready for the bowline before I had dragged it aboard. She threw it over her head quickly, got over the bow without help, and was presently safe on the beach.

But when it came to Carey's turn the poor girl shrieked out, and shrunk back in an agony of terror. I had so great a horror of forcing her, after my dreadful struggle with Lady Brookes, that I cried to Sir Mor-daunt, "Let it be your turn, then. It will comfort your wife to have you. I will reason with Carey, and when you are gone she may follow quietly."

He knew as well as I that there was no time to be wasted, and I believe he, too, dreaded the spectacle of Carey's terror and the sound of her cries. I helped him over the bows, and whilst the men hauled him

along, I seized the girl's hand and bade her mark how easy it was, how free from danger ; and was thus speaking to her as tenderly and encouragingly as the state of mind I was then in would permit, when a great sea struck the yacht right amidships, and spreading like a gigantic fan, poured in a vast overwhelming deluge clean over the vessel. Nothing could have resisted that tremendous and crushing Niagara of a sea. In an instant I felt myself carried away by a force so astounding that temporarily it killed every instinct of life in me, and I don't remember that I made the least exertion to save myself, no, not by so much as extending my arms. But in the midst of the thunder of the enormous surge I could distinctly hear the rending and crashing of the yacht's hull, and knew by the sounds, as though I had seen the fabric demolished, that the schooner had gone to pieces.

When I rose to the surface of the water I found myself among a quantity of fragments

of floating timber, one piece of which I seized. The waves were heights of creaming foam, and I seemed to rise and fall upon a surface of heaving, leaping, and wildly-blown snow. Being run up by a wave, I saw about a stone's throw distant the figure of Norie clasping a short spar, and quite close to me was Carey, clinging to a fragment of one of the yacht's ribs. I waited until the next sea hove me up, and then shouted to her to hold tight, and that I would endeavour to get to her; and seizing a lighter piece of wood than I had first grasped, I pointed my face towards her and struck out with my feet, exerting all my strength. The tide took me her way, and meanwhile I was able to stem the current by help of the wind and by violently moving my legs. At last a sea swung the piece of timber to which she clung close to me, on which I grasped her arm, and seeing that the fragment that sustained her would support us both, I let go my piece

of wreck and grabbed with my left hand at hers. I cried in her ear, with the hope of keeping her poor heart up, that the land was close, and that there was no fear of her sinking if she kept a good hold. Had I been alone, I cannot flatter myself that I should have exhibited anything like the spirit that was animating me now. I might have held on with a dogged madness for life, but I dare say no more than my animal instincts would have operated. The need of this helpless woman surprisingly stimulated me. She created in me, I will say, a high and honest courage. I took her by the waist, and with a jerk planted her upon the piece of timber, so that the swell of her breast stayed her, and lifted her head well above the water. The whirl of the seas swayed us round and round; sometimes our faces looked towards the land, and sometimes towards the reef where the yacht had gone to pieces, and where the water was boiling

with a frightful sound. Whenever we confronted the beach I struck out with my legs. My dread, my fearful expectation was that the tide, as it gained in force, would run us out to sea, in which case there would be no hope for us ; but after we had been tossing in the water for upwards of a quarter of an hour, I saw from the height of a tall sea that we were steadily nearing the beach, upon which stood the people who had been saved, and I then perceived that the wind blowing with violence against the tide tended to drift us landward, whilst every sea that ran also helped us forward.

I could see nothing of Norie, and supposed he was drowned. The wind, as I had anticipated from the appearance of the sky, had risen into a gale, and the foam flew along the water like sheets of steam ; and whenever the combers whirled us with our faces to the blast, we had like to have lost our sight as well as have been suffocated by the fury

with which the pitiless spray poured against us. As minute after minute went by, the agony of that struggle grew greater and greater. I do not mean that I found my strength failing me, or that my poor companion relaxed her deathlike embrace of the piece of timber that floated us. It was the wild and dashing tossing of the sea; the hissing and deafening seething and crackling of spume in our ears; the rush of foam over our heads when the crest of a wave broke after we had been hove to its summit; the appalling feeling of littleness and helplessness inspired by those mad white waters, and the insignificance of the strength we possessed to oppose to them—it was these things which made that struggle the great agony it became.

But in consequence of our steady approach to the land, my spirits never utterly sank. Whenever it was in my power to do so, I called to my companion to keep up her

courage, that our sufferings would soon be over ; until at last we found ourselves among the breakers. I threw myself upon the woman's back, with my hands grasping the timber on either side her arms, so that my weight might keep her body pressed to the spar ; and scarcely was I so planted when a roaring sea took us and ran us towards the beach at the rate of an express train. It completely buried us, and I felt myself flying round and round in it like a wheel, frenziedly grasping the timber and feeling the woman's body under me. Oh, the sickening, swooning, deathlike sensation of that rush ! the thunder of the water in the ears ! the choking, suffocating, bursting feeling in the head and breast ! It hurled us upon the beach, and flung us there with such violence that I let go, unable to keep my fists clenched. I was seized by the hair, but in an instant wrenched away and torn back into the coiling arch of the next

breaker, which rolled shatteringly over me with a sound as though the earth were splitting in halves ; and then I suppose my senses left me, for I have no further memory of struggling in the water.

END OF VOL. II.

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